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PETER MILLIGAN and DUNCAN FEGREDO
"BEAUTY IS ONLY A SCALPEL AWAY..."

FEGREDO 14

created by PETER MILLIGAN
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HAVE I EVER TOLD YOU
THAT I'VE OFTEN IMAGINED
DOING THIS? TAKING A
KNIFE TO MY OWN FACE ...

MY FACE IS STARTING
TO WORRY ME. YOU
MIGHT NOT NOTICE THE
CHANGES BUT I DO.



I'VE FOLDED BACK THE SKIN AND
TAKEN A PEEK AT WHAT LIES BE-
NEATH, SEE. I'VE SCRAPED AWAY
THE SUBCUTANEOUS GUNK OF TIME.

WHAT I'M SAYING IS, I KNOW
WHAT HAPPENS TO A FACE,
EVEN A YOUNGISH, HAND-
SOME FACE LIKE MINE.
I KNOW WHAT EVERY
LINE, WHAT EVERY
SAG PORTENDS.



I START UNDER THE EYES.
A BLEPHAROPLASTY.

A SIMPLE INCISION, AN
ELEGANT ARC THROUGH SKIN,
MUSCLE, ORBITAL SEPTUM ...

I USE ELECTRO-COAGULATION
TO CONTROL THE BLEEDING AS
I HACK AWAY THE EXCESS
FATTY TISSUE.

I'VE ANESTHETIZED MY
FACE WITH MY SPECIAL
ETHYL CHLORIDE AND
COCAINE SPRAY.



THIS INDUCES A FEELING OF
CALM WITHOUT CAUSING
MUCH HAND-SHAKE.

THE WRONG MUSCLE SLICED AT
THIS STAGE BY A TREMBLING
BLADE WILL CHRONICALLY
ALTER MY EYE'S APPEARANCE
AND FUNCTION ...



DAVID?



IT'S APRÈS THE FACE LIFT AND I'M HAVING LUNCH WITH REBECCA AND DAD AT THAT NEW NOUVEAU SOUL FOOD TRATTORIA ON PICO...

LOOK, IN TWO YEARS I'LL BE EARNING MORE THAN YOU. IN FOUR YEARS I'LL BE AN ASSOCIATE PARTNER OF PERFECTION U.S.A.

IN SIX YEARS YOU'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO BOOK TEN WEEKS IN ADVANCE JUST TO HEAR ME FART.

ALL I'M SAYING, AND I KNOW I'VE SAID IT A MILLION TIMES BEFORE, IS THAT I THINK IT'S A SHAMEFUL WASTE OF YOUR TALENT. THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING HERE.

AND HOW ARE YOU DOING THIS? TUCKING RICH WOMEN'S STOMACHS? SLICING LAYERS OF JELLY FROM PENDULOUS BUTTOCKS? STRETCHING OLD, TIRED SKIN INTO SOME KIND OF... OF PARODY OF YOUTH?

THAT'S AN OUTDATED WAY OF THINKING. WHAT I DO MIGHT NOT SAVE LIVES... BUT IT IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE.

YOU GUYS ALWAYS FORGET ABOUT THE QUALITY, YOU'RE SO OBSESSED WITH SAVING LIFE. WELL, LIFE CAN SUCK. IT'S HOW GOOD IT IS THAT COUNTS.

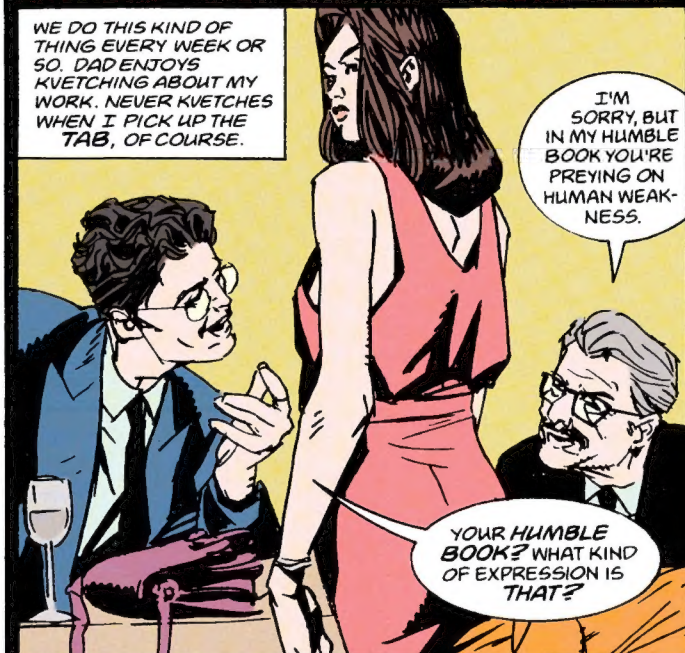
HEY, THAT'S LINDA EVANGELISTA OVER THERE.

REALLY? WHERE?

WHO'S LINDA EVANGELISTA?



LINDA EXITS WITH HER COTERIE BEFORE I CAN GET A GOOD LOOK AT HER. PITY. I LIKE GETTING CLOSE TO MODELS. I LIKE TO SEE IF I CAN DETECT THE HAND OF ONE OF MY COMPETITORS.



WE DO THIS KIND OF THING EVERY WEEK OR SO. DAD ENJOYS KVETCHING ABOUT MY WORK. NEVER KVETCHES WHEN I PICK UP THE TAB, OF COURSE.

I'M SORRY, BUT IN MY HUMBLE BOOK YOU'RE PREYING ON HUMAN WEAKNESS.

YOUR HUMBLE BOOK? WHAT KIND OF EXPRESSION IS THAT?

WE'VE ONLY BEEN MARRIED EIGHT MONTHS BUT I'VE KNOWN BECCY ALMOST TWO YEARS NOW. SAMMY, MY COUSIN, INTRO'D US. THE ONE GOOD THING THAT SCHMUCK EVER DID.

YOU BOYS WILL HAVE TO FINISH THIS ON YOUR OWN. I'VE GOT TO GET THAT PIECE ON THE SEXUALITY OF KITCHEN APPLIANCES FINISHED BY FOUR.



GOOD LUCK.



I GAVE HER A RHINOPLASTY PLUS A LITTLE DERMABRASION BEFORE THE WEDDING DAY.

I'M TRYING TO PERSUADE HER TO LET ME AT HER CHEEKS BUT IT'S AN UPHILL STRUGGLE.



A REALLY CUTE BLACK GIRL WITH ALMOST ORIENTAL EPICANTHIC FOLDS AROUND HER EYES BRINGS US HERBAL COFFEE AND THEN WE'RE OUT OF HERE.

I THINK THE PLACE IS OVERRATED, ACTUALLY.

WHEN I GET BACK TO THE OFFICE THERE'S A MAN WAITING FOR ME.

IT TAKES ME A FEW SECONDS TO TRANSLATE THIS SHIT. THE OLD MAN HAS A BRITISH ACCENT AND THESE REALLY PRONOUNCED NASO-LABIAL GROOVES.

DOCTOR SCHOLEM, MY NAME IS **GILBERT ALLEYN** AND I REPRESENT MY EMPLOYER, WHO HAS INTIMATED AN INTEREST IN ACQUIRING YOUR SERVICES.

I'LL NEED TO SEE HIM IN PERSON.

MAY I ASK WHO LET YOU IN HERE?

YOUR SUPERIOR. A DOCTOR MEYER, I BELIEVE.

YOU'VE SPOKEN TO DOCTOR MEYER?

I'VE EXPLAINED THE ENTIRE THING TO HIM AND HE SEEMS INORDINATELY KEEN THAT YOU ACCEPT MY EMPLOYER'S OFFER.

HE USED THE TERM **KHDOS**, PRESUMABLY FROM THE GREEK, MEANING ACCLAIM, GLORY OR PRESTIGE.

JUST WHO... JUST WHO *IS* THIS EMPLOYER OF YOURS?

ANDREW SPHINX, SIR.

AT FIRST THE NAME DOESN'T REGISTER. I'M DISAPPOINTED. I WAS HOPING IT WOULD BE MICHELLE PFEIFFER, HILLARY CLINTON, ROBIN WILLIAMS, SOMEONE LIKE THAT.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT, OF COURSE...

YOU DON'T MEAN...

YOU DON'T MEAN **ANDREW SPHINX**... THE ARTIST?

THEN THE NAME KIND OF EXPLODES IN MY FACE.

THAT'S EXACTLY WHO I DO MEAN, SIR.



WOW.
HE'S... HE'S
IMPORTANT,
ISN'T HE?

THE WORLD'S
GREATEST LIVING ARTIST,
SIR. MANY THINK THE **CENTURY'S**
GREATEST ARTIST. IT HAS EVEN BEEN
MUTED THAT HE IS **THE** GREATEST
ARTIST OF ALL TIME, PARTICULARLY
IN PORTRAITURE.



AND HE
WANTS ME
TO GIVE HIM
A FACE
JOB?



AHH... I FEEL HE MIGHT
RECOIL FROM SUCH RUDE
TERMINOLOGY, SIR. WITH RESPECT,
YOU ARE NOT DEALING WITH
SOME FADING FILM
STAR HERE.

THE EXACT
NATURE OF MR.
SPHINX'S REQUIREMENTS
WILL BE DISCUSSED LATER
WHEN YOU AND YOUR
WIFE ARE SETTLED
IN ON THE
ISLAND.



HOLD ON,
LET'S REWIND
A LITTLE THERE.
ME AND MY
WIFE? WHAT
ISLAND?

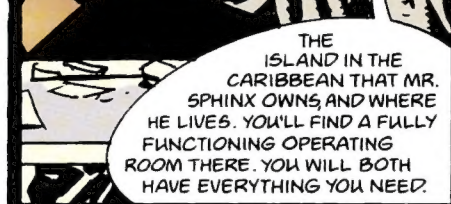


YOU WILL STAY ON
THE ISLAND UNTIL YOUR
WORK IS COMPLETED.
WE ESTIMATE THIS WILL
BE IN THE REGION OF
SIX MONTHS.

I'LL FURNISH
DOCTOR MEYER
WITH THE TRAVEL
ARRANGEMENTS.



GOOD
DAY, DOCTOR
SCHOLEM.



THE
ISLAND IN THE
CARIBBEAN THAT MR.
SPHINX OWNS AND WHERE
HE LIVES. YOU'LL FIND A FULLY
FUNCTIONING OPERATING
ROOM THERE. YOU WILL BOTH
HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED.



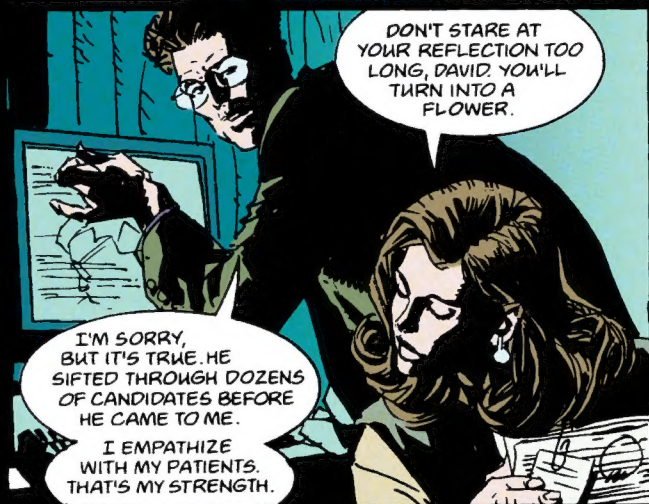
IT'S JUST SUCH AN *OPPORTUNITY*. NO ONE'S SEEN HIM IN YEARS. HE'S A LEGEND. AND I'LL BE THE ONE WHO OPERATES ON HIM.

WHEN HE REAPPEARS IN PUBLIC IT WILL BE *MY FACE* PEOPLE WILL SEE. *MY ARTISTRY*.



BUT WHY *YOU*? THIS TOWN'S GOT MORE COSMETIC SURGEONS THAN MANHATTAN'S GOT YELLOW CABS.

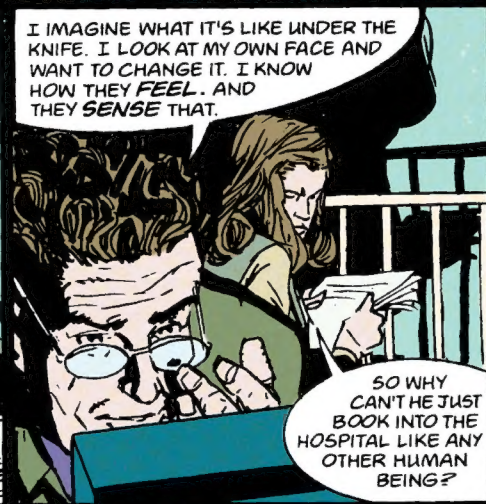
BECAUSE I'M GOOD, REBECCA. I'M VERY GOOD. OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE THE TECHNIQUE, YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE FLEXIBLE AND DARING.



DON'T STARE AT YOUR REFLECTION TOO LONG, DAVID. YOU'LL TURN INTO A FLOWER.

I'M SORRY, BUT IT'S TRUE. HE SIFTED THROUGH DOZENS OF CANDIDATES BEFORE HE CAME TO ME.

I EMPATHIZE WITH MY PATIENTS. THAT'S MY STRENGTH.



I IMAGINE WHAT IT'S LIKE UNDER THE KNIFE. I LOOK AT MY OWN FACE AND WANT TO CHANGE IT. I KNOW HOW THEY *FEEL*. AND THEY *SENSE* THAT.

SO WHY CAN'T HE JUST BOOK INTO THE HOSPITAL LIKE ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING?



REBECCA, HE'S *NOT* JUST ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING.

BUT SIX MONTHS. WHAT ABOUT MY CAREER?



YOU'RE ALWAYS MOANING ABOUT THE MAGAZINE AND THE BITCHES WHO RUN IT. MAYBE THIS IS THE INCENTIVE YOU NEED FOR *QUITTING*.

YOU HAVEN'T TOUCHED YOUR NOVEL FOR AGES. THIS WILL BE THE PERFECT PLACE TO FINISH IT. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE *PARADISE* THERE.

REBECCA IS WRITING A JACKIE-COLLINS-STYLE AIRPORT NOVEL ABOUT A BEAUTIFUL JEWISH GIRL WHO MOVES TO BEVERLY HILLS AND WRITES A HUGE SUCCESSFUL JACKIE-COLLINS-STYLE AIRPORT NOVEL.

IT'S GOING TO BE FANTASTIC AND MAKE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

MEYER HAS TOLD ME I'LL BE PROMOTED AS SOON AS I GET BACK. AND IF I DON'T DO THIS, SOME YOUNG, HUNGRY LITTLE SHIT WILL TAKE MY PLACE.
PLEASE, BECCY.

OKAY. GIVE ME SOME TIME TO CLEAR OUT MY DESK.

REBECCA, YOU'RE THE BEST WIFE I'VE EVER HAD.

I'LL PHONE MEYER. HE'S REALLY BEEN SWEATING ON THIS.



EXCUSE ME, WHICH OF THESE BOOKS ON SPHINX IS THE BEST?

I DON'T WORK HERE.

OH. I'D STILL APPRECIATE YOUR ADVICE.

SHE STOPS AT THAT AND LOOKS AT ME. SHE'S HAD RHINOPLASTY-- OR MAYBE JUST NASAL TIP SURGERY. I FIND THE UNCERTAINTY ATTRACTIVE.

THE ONE BY GOTTLIEB IS PROBABLY THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE.

THANKS.

LOOK, I'M REALLY HOPELESS AT THIS KIND OF THING, BUT... COULD I, AH, HAVE YOUR NUMBER? MAYBE WE CAN CATCH AN EXHIBITION SOMETIME OR HAVE DINNER?

GREAT ZYGOMATIC BONE DEFINITION, BY THE WAY.

OKAY. I TEND TO WORK LATE DURING WEEKDAYS, THOUGH. MY NAME'S MADELINE. WHAT'S YOURS?

SHE HESITATES AGAIN AND I BEGIN TO SUSPECT THAT SHE'S HAD A LITTLE EYE-BROW RESHAPING.

SHE'S PROBABLY ONLY TWENTY-FOUR BUT A FEW TELLTALE VERTICAL GLABELLAR TELL ME SHE'LL BE A CANDIDATE FOR A FOREHEAD LIFT WITHIN, OH, TEN YEARS?

GILBERT.

AS SHE HEADS OFF TOWARDS THE COUNTER SHE GLANCES BACK AT ME AND I LIFT MY EYES FROM HER TIGHT LITTLE GLUTEAL AREA AND SMILE.

I WON'T CALL HER, OF COURSE. BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT.



IN THE END I BUY ALL OF THE SPHINX BOOKS. SOMETIMES I'M TERRIBLE AT MAKING MY MIND UP.

WE TEAR OUT A LOAD OF EXPENSIVE PRINTS AND LAY THEM ON THE FLOOR. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF ART, FROM NINETEEN-FIFTY TO SEVENTY-FIVE.

I PREFER THE EARLIER STUFF, LIKE THIS. "HORTENCE GARDENING." HE SEEMS TO HAVE PAINTED THIS HORTENCE A LOT.



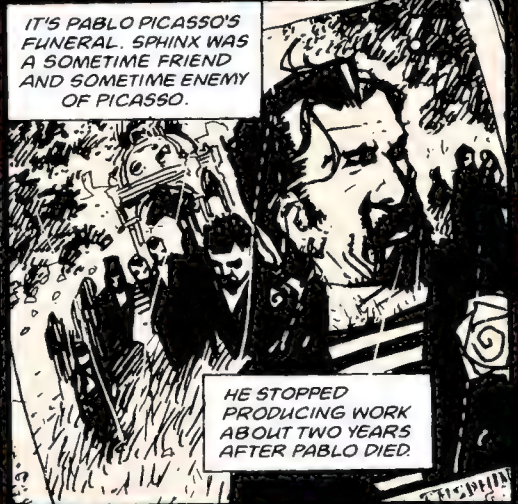
YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND OR APPRECIATE MODERN ART.

I JUST PREFER FIGURATIVE ART. FIGURATIVE ART IS ALL THE RAGE NOW.



HEY, IT SAYS THIS IS THE LAST KNOWN PHOTOGRAPH OF HIM. IT'S FROM NINETEEN-SEVENTY-THREE. HE WAS FORTY-SEVEN.

IT'S PABLO PICASSO'S FUNERAL. SPHINX WAS A SOMETIME FRIEND AND SOMETIME ENEMY OF PICASSO.



HE STOPPED PRODUCING WORK ABOUT TWO YEARS AFTER PABLO DIED.



THERE AREN'T MANY DECENT PHOTOS OF HIM, OTHER THAN WHEN HE WAS YOUNG. HE WAS ALWAYS A CAMERA-SHY, SHADOWY FIGURE.

**DNGGGG
DNGGGG**

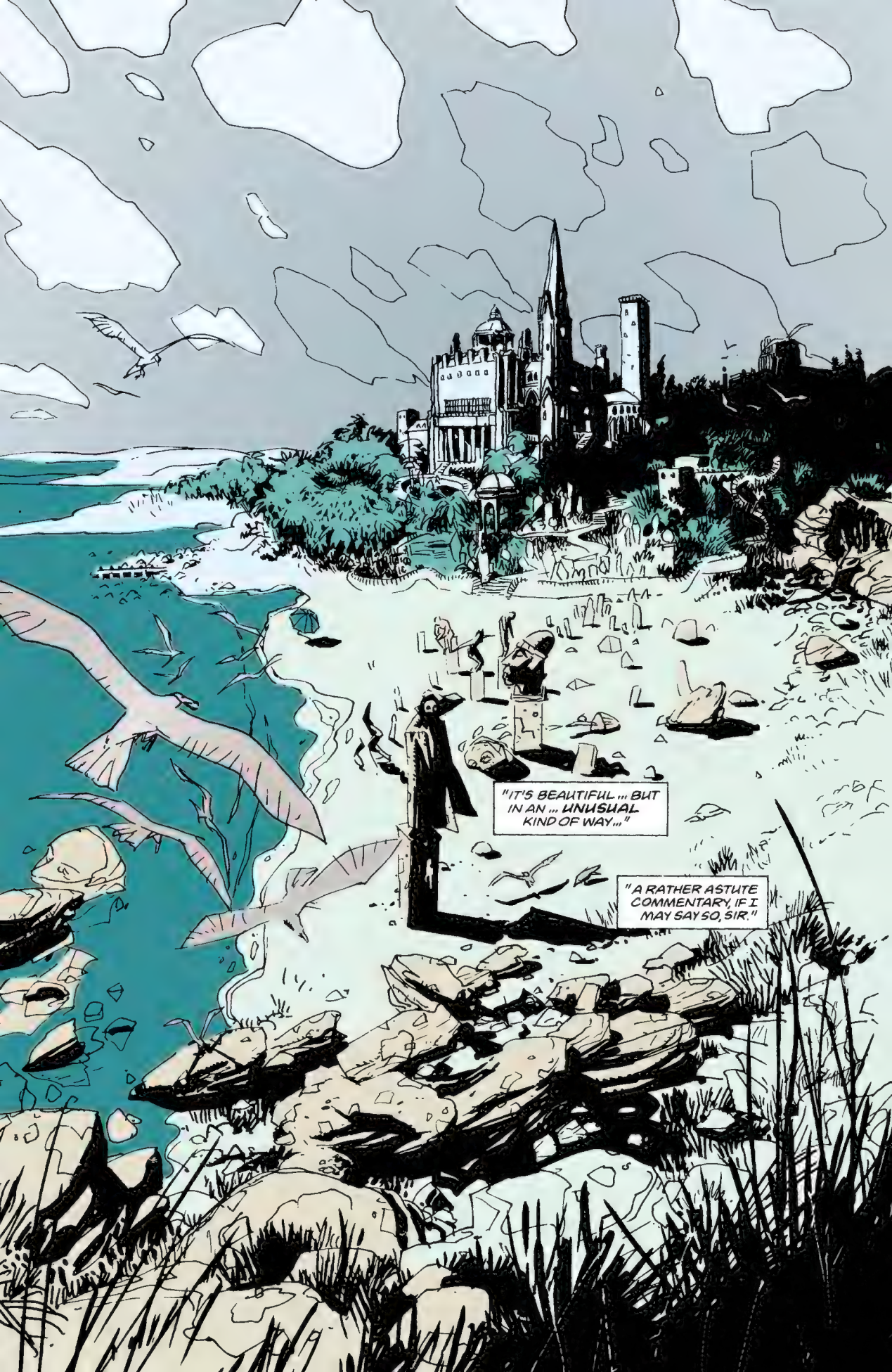


PROBABLY WHY HE GOT SO HUGE.



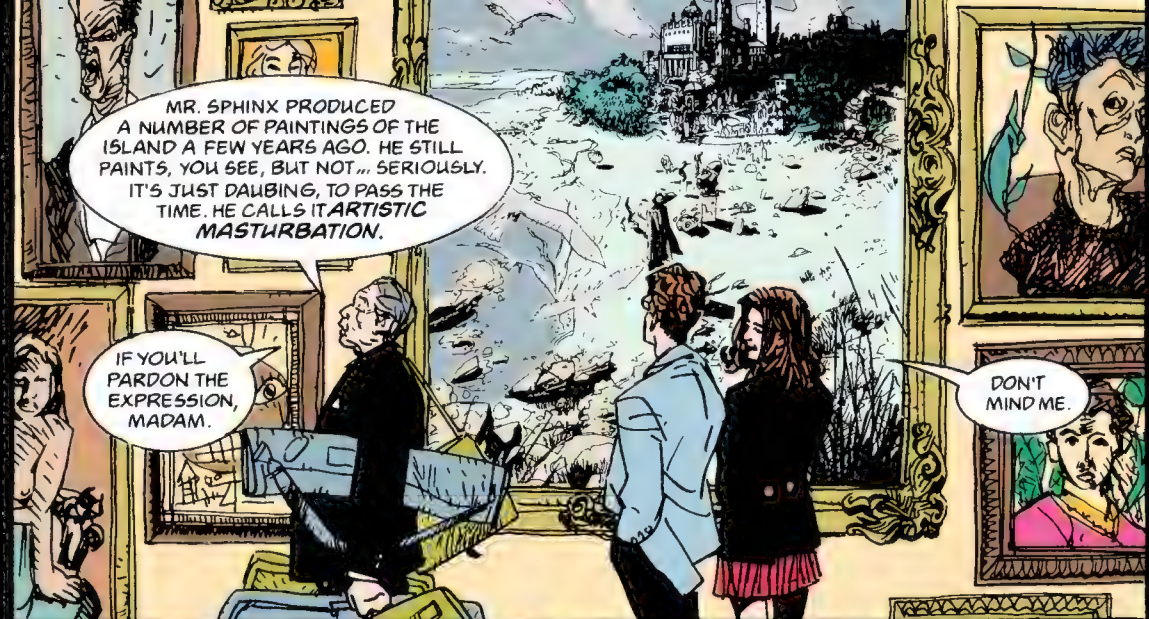
IT'S MEYER. HE'S WETTING HIMSELF. HE'S SPOKEN TO SPHINX.

REBECCA AND I LEAVE FIRST THING TOMORROW. MY LIFE IS TAKING OFF.



"IT'S BEAUTIFUL ... BUT
IN AN ... UNUSUAL
KIND OF WAY ..."

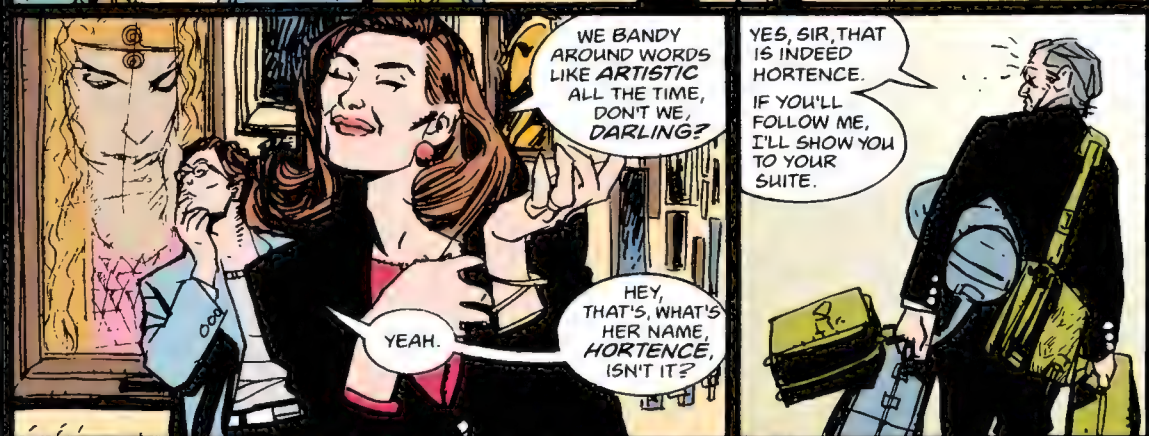
"A RATHER ASTUTE
COMMENTARY, IF I
MAY SAY SO, SIR."



MR. SPHINX PRODUCED A NUMBER OF PAINTINGS OF THE ISLAND A FEW YEARS AGO. HE STILL PAINTS, YOU SEE, BUT NOT... SERIOUSLY. IT'S JUST DAUBING, TO PASS THE TIME. HE CALLS IT **ARTISTIC MASTURBATION**.

IF YOU'LL PARDON THE EXPRESSION, MADAM.

DON'T MIND ME.



WE BANDY AROUND WORDS LIKE **ARTISTIC** ALL THE TIME, DON'T WE, **DARLING?**

YES, SIR, THAT IS INDEED HORTECE. IF YOU'LL FOLLOW ME, I'LL SHOW YOU TO YOUR SUITE.

YEAH.

HEY, THAT'S WHAT'S HER NAME, **HORTECE**, ISN'T IT?



WE WALK THROUGH CORRIDORS LINED WITH VAN GOGHS, PICASSOS, MAGRITTES, GAUGUINS, WARHOLS, KLEES, SPHINXES...

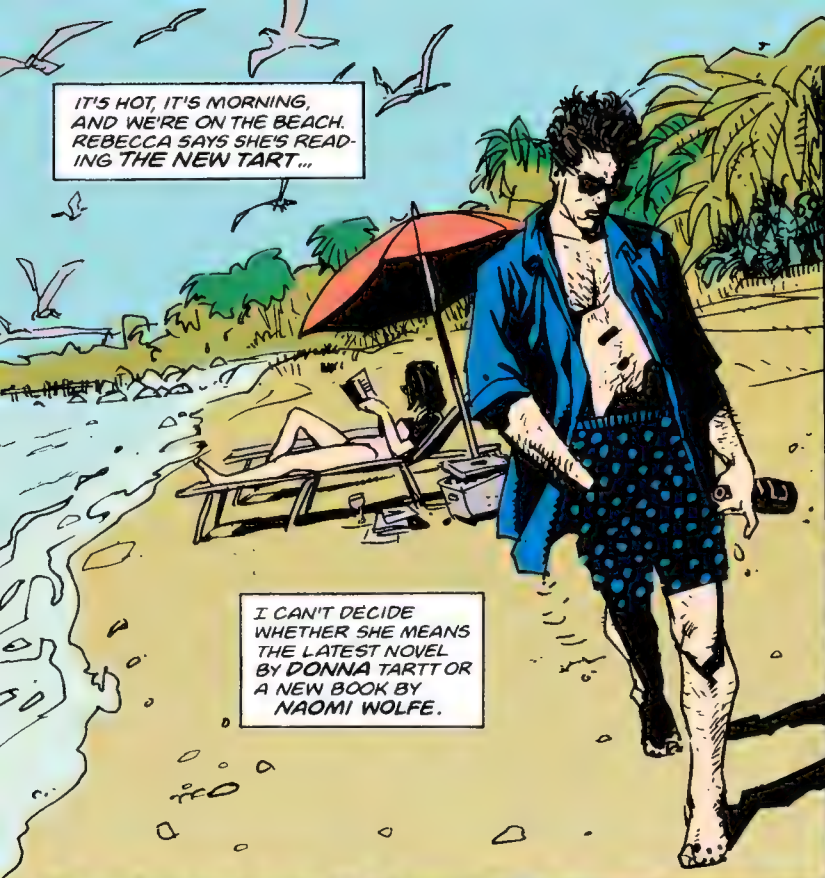
MOST OF THEM ARE PORTRAITS, DEAD FACES STARING AT US AS WE FOLLOW GILBERT, WHOM REBECCA HAS TAKEN AN INSTANT DISLIKE TO, I CAN TELL.



SHE LIKES OUR SUITE THOUGH. THERE'S TWENTY MILLION DOLLARS' WORTH OF ROTHKO ON THE WALL (OKAY, I'M GUESSING, BUT IT'S A LOT).

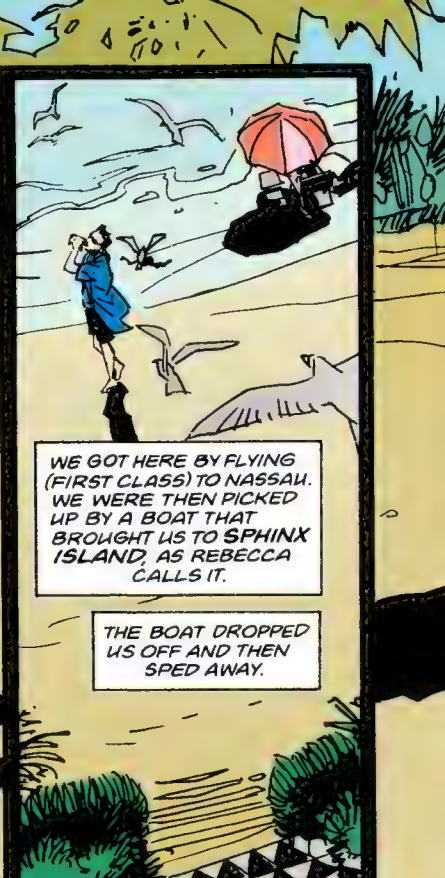
WOW.

THIS IS THE PROMISED LAND, REBECCA.



IT'S HOT, IT'S MORNING,
AND WE'RE ON THE BEACH.
REBECCA SAYS SHE'S READ-
ING THE NEW TART...

I CAN'T DECIDE
WHETHER SHE MEANS
THE LATEST NOVEL
BY DONNA TARTT OR
A NEW BOOK BY
NAOMI WOLFE.



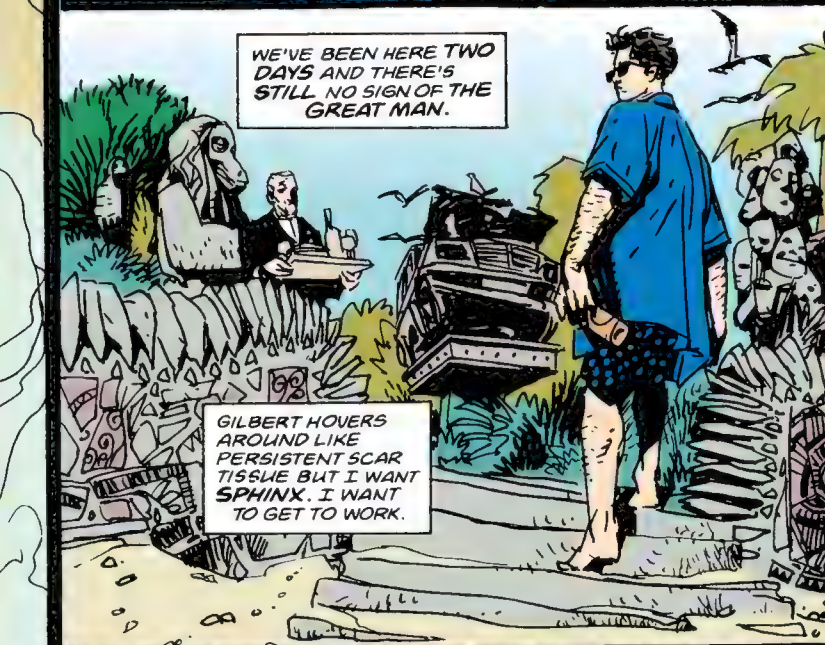
WE GOT HERE BY FLYING
(FIRST CLASS) TO NASSAU.
WE WERE THEN PICKED
UP BY A BOAT THAT
BROUGHT US TO SPHINX
ISLAND, AS REBECCA
CALLS IT.

THE BOAT DROPPED
US OFF AND THEN
SPED AWAY.



OF COURSE THE PLACE JUST
RIPS THE BACK OF YOUR SCALP
OFF. YOU THINK, THIS IS HOW
LIFE IS MEANT TO BE. I WANT
THIS, ALL THE TIME, FOR EVER.

BUT NOW, PERSONALLY,
HONESTLY, ALL THIS
NATURAL BEAUTY IS
STARTING TO PISS ME
OFF A LITTLE.

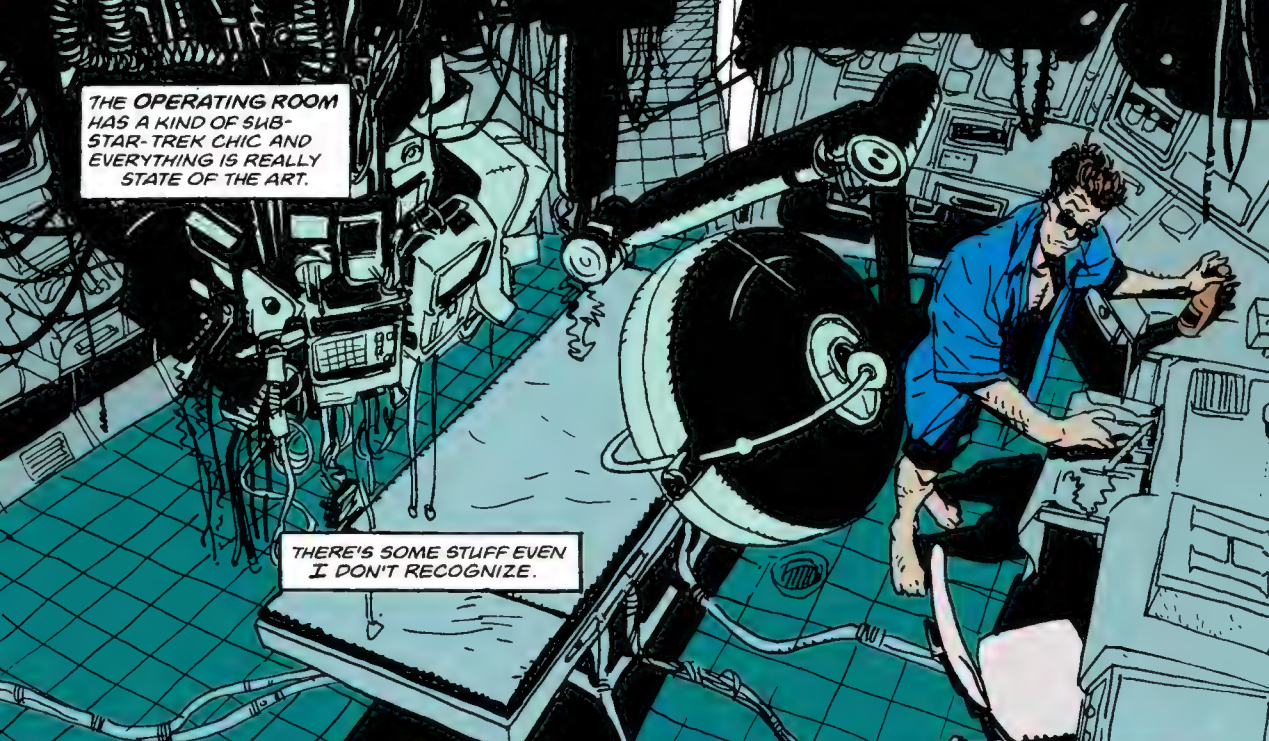


WE'VE BEEN HERE TWO
DAYS AND THERE'S
STILL NO SIGN OF THE
GREAT MAN.

GILBERT HOVERS
AROUND LIKE
PERSISTENT SCAR
TISSUE BUT I WANT
SPHINX. I WANT
TO GET TO WORK.



I WANT TO WAVE A SCALPEL
AROUND AND TELL THE
PERSON WHOSE FACE I'M
CUTTING NOT TO WORRY,
IT'LL SOON BE OVER.



THE OPERATING ROOM
HAS A KIND OF SUB-
STAR-TREK CHIC AND
EVERYTHING IS REALLY
STATE OF THE ART.

THERE'S SOME STUFF EVEN
I DON'T RECOGNIZE.

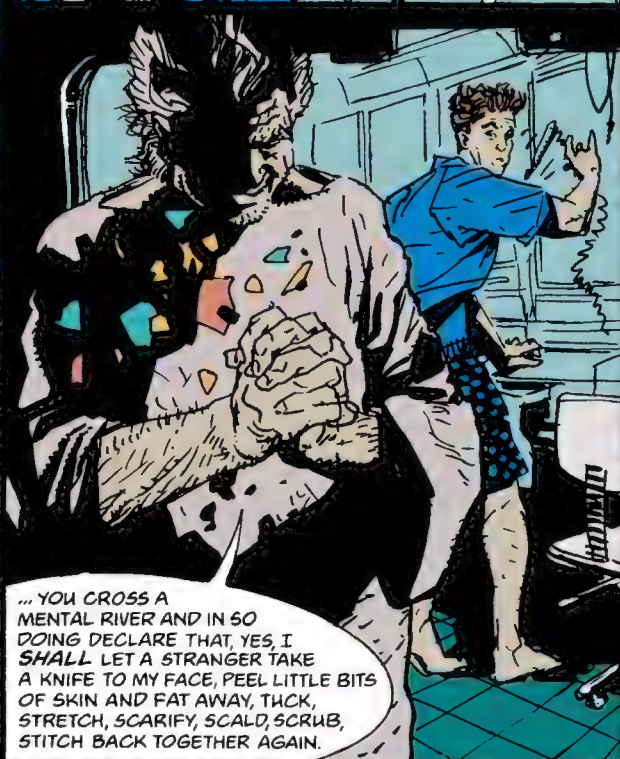


BY THE WAY, HAVE I
TOLD YOU THAT
REBECCA FOUND THE
TELEPHONE NUMBER
I GOT FROM THAT
BOOK SOUP GIRL?

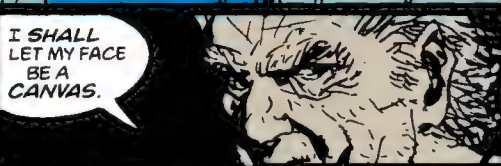
IT'S LIKE
CROSSING THE
RUBICON,
ISN'T IT?



I SHALL
LET MY FACE
BE A
CANVAS.



... YOU CROSS A
MENTAL RIVER AND IN SO
DOING DECLARE THAT, YES, I
SHALL LET A STRANGER TAKE
A KNIFE TO MY FACE, PEEL LITTLE BITS
OF SKIN AND FAT AWAY, TUCK,
STRETCH, SCARIFY, SCALD, SCRUB,
STITCH BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.

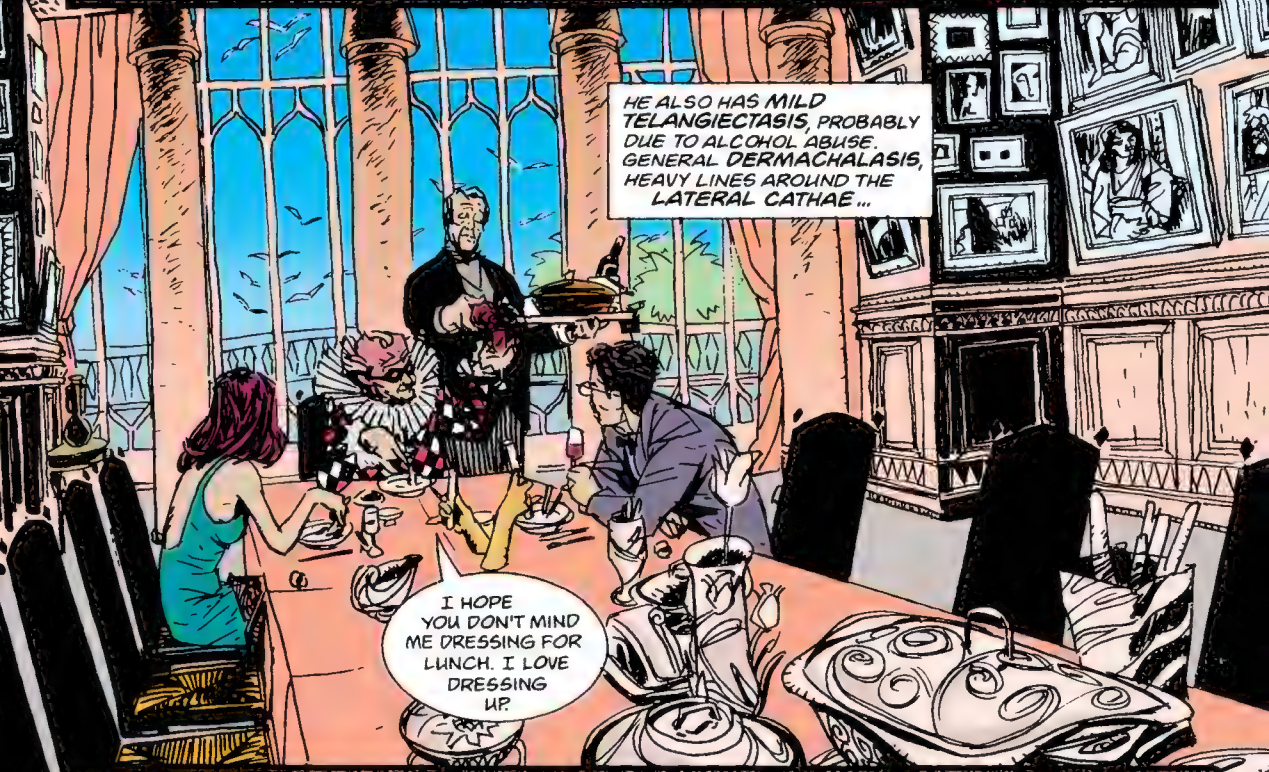


I'M ANDREW.
I THINK LUNCH
IS READY.
LET'S EAT.



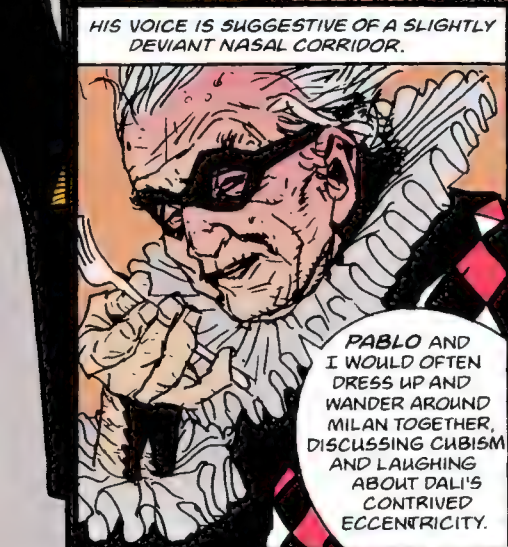


THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. ANDREW SPHINX IS AN ASS-HOLE.



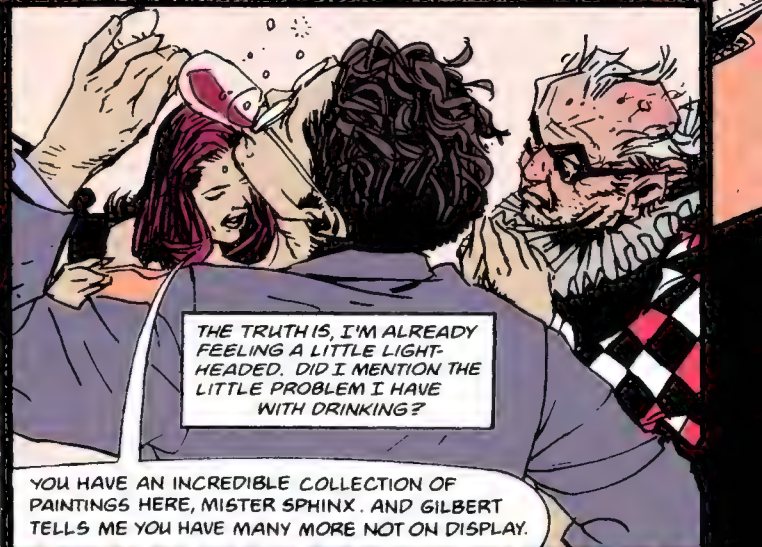
HE ALSO HAS MILD TELANGIECTASIS, PROBABLY DUE TO ALCOHOL ABUSE. GENERAL DERMACHALASIS, HEAVY LINES AROUND THE LATERAL CATHAE...

I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME DRESSING FOR LUNCH. I LOVE DRESSING UP.



HIS VOICE IS SUGGESTIVE OF A SLIGHTLY DEVIANT NASAL CORRIDOR.

PABLO AND I WOULD OFTEN DRESS UP AND WANDER AROUND MILAN TOGETHER, DISCUSSING CUBISM AND LAUGHING ABOUT DALI'S CONTRIVED ECCENTRICITY.



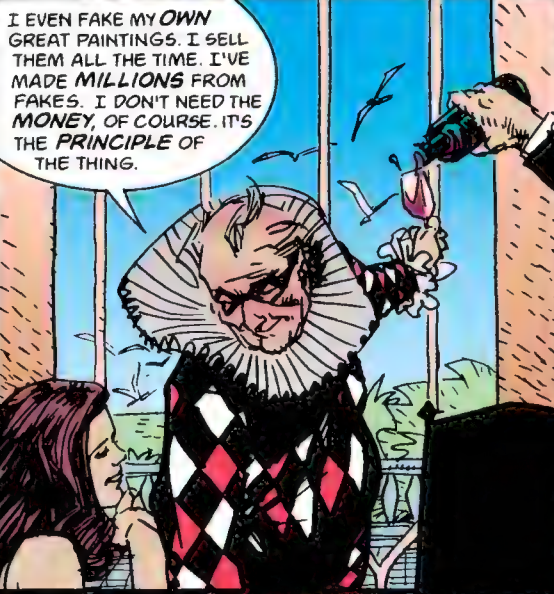
THE TRUTH IS, I'M ALREADY FEELING A LITTLE LIGHT-HEADED. DID I MENTION THE LITTLE PROBLEM I HAVE WITH DRINKING?

YOU HAVE AN INCREDIBLE COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS HERE, MISTER SPHINX. AND GILBERT TELLS ME YOU HAVE MANY MORE NOT ON DISPLAY.



PLEASE, CALL ME ANDREW.

MANY OF THE PAINTINGS YOU'VE SEEN ARE FAKES, MY DEAR. SINCE I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PAINT SERIOUSLY, I PASS THE TIME BY DAUBING AND FAKING GREAT PAINTINGS.



I EVEN FAKE MY OWN GREAT PAINTINGS. I SELL THEM ALL THE TIME. I'VE MADE MILLIONS FROM FAKES. I DON'T NEED THE MONEY, OF COURSE. IT'S THE PRINCIPLE OF THE THING.



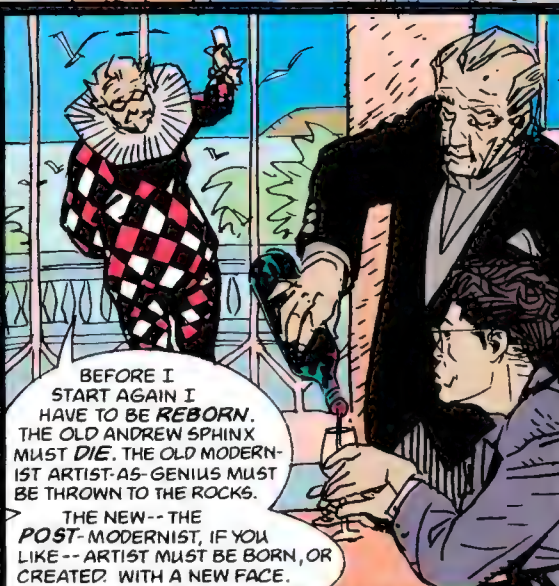
WHY DID YOU STOP PAINTING? I MEAN, PAINTING SERIOUSLY.



A LONG STORY. AND IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS YOU ARE HERE. I WANT TO START AGAIN, YOU SEE. I WANT TO BE A SERIOUS ARTIST AGAIN.



AND WHEN I SAY SERIOUS I DON'T MEAN IN ANY MISERABLE OR SELF-IMPORTANT WAY. I MEAN THOUGHTFUL, PLAYFUL, MEANINGFUL, MEANINGLESS.



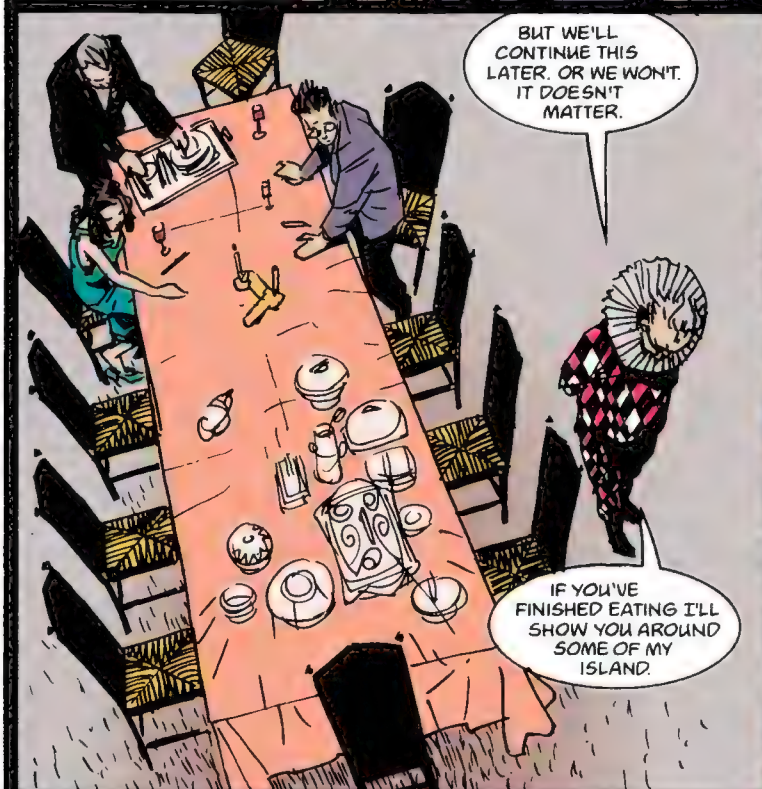
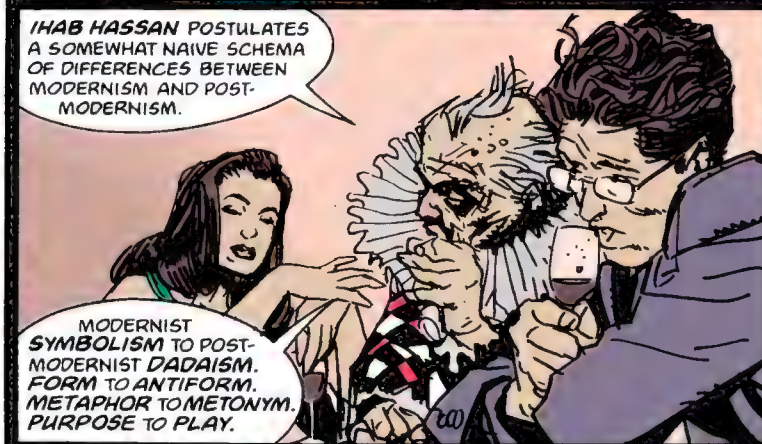
BEFORE I START AGAIN I HAVE TO BE REBORN. THE OLD ANDREW SPHINX MUST DIE. THE OLD MODERNIST ARTIST-AS-GENIUS MUST BE THROWN TO THE ROCKS.

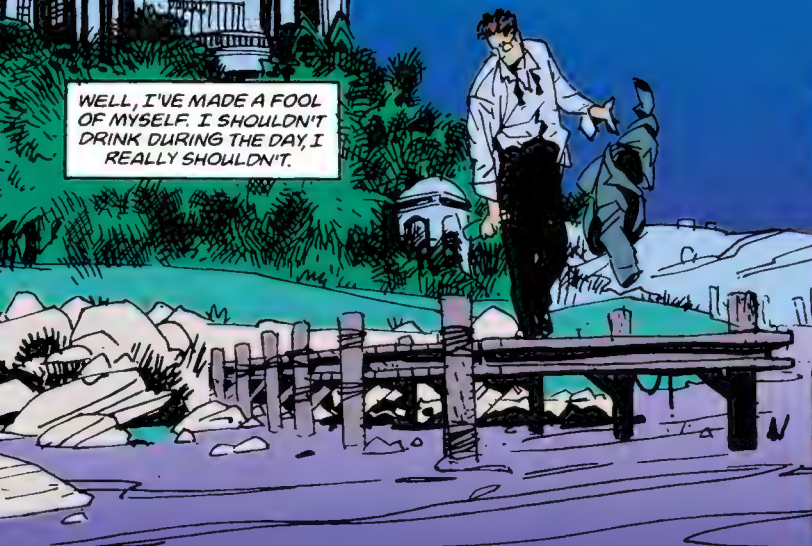
THE NEW-- THE POST-MODERNIST, IF YOU LIKE -- ARTIST MUST BE BORN, OR CREATED. WITH A NEW FACE.



I'VE TRIED TO ISOLATE MYSELF HERE BUT IT IS, ULTIMATELY, IMPOSSIBLE. WE LIVE IN THE POST-MODERN AGE, DAVID.

THE POST BIG IDEA ERA WHERE EVERYWHERE IS EVERYWHERE, AND WE ARE ALL TOURISTS, AND EVERYTHING IS A FAKE, ETCETERA, ET CETERA...

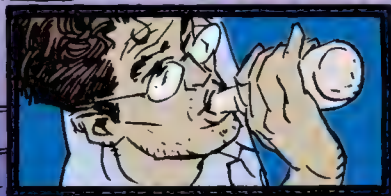




WELL, I'VE MADE A FOOL
OF MYSELF. I SHOULDN'T
DRINK DURING THE DAY, I
REALLY SHOULDN'T.

REBECCA IS SLEEPING, OR
PRETENDING TO, BACK AT THE
SUITE.

SPHINX TOOK US FOR A LITTLE
TOUR OF HIS DOMAIN, DROPPING
MORE NAMES THAN WE
DROPPED BOMBS ON IRAQ.



BUT REBECCA SEEMED
CHARMED. DID I
EVER TELL YOU HOW
GULLIBLE SHE IS?

THEN WE GOT TO THE
VALLEY OF THE NUDES...



MY GOD.
TALK ABOUT
SENSORY OVER-
LOAD.

I'M SORRY.
THE PLACE WASN'T
DESIGNED FOR PUBLIC
VIEWING.

DON'T
APOLOGIZE... IT'S
WONDERFUL.
THEY'RE
INCREDIBLE.

SOME OF THEM STILL PLEASE ME. IN FACT,
THIS IS QUITE AN EMOTIONAL MOMENT
FOR ME. YOU'RE THE FIRST WOMAN TO
LOOK AT THEM FOR A QUARTER OF A
CENTURY.

SOMEHOW,
YOU'RE IMBUING
THE ROOM WITH A
KIND OF... SEXUAL
IMMEDIACY.

FORGIVE ME FOR
SAYING SO, ANDREW, BUT YOU
SEEM TO BE FASCINATED BY THE
GROSSLY EXAGGERATED AREOLAE
OF THE FEMALE NIPPLE. AM I
RIGHT OR AM I RIGHT?



I'M SORRY,
DAVID?

DAVID,
ARE YOU BOMBED
ALREADY?

OF COURSE
NOT.

THIS IS
HORTENCE, ISN'T
IT? **MOST** OF THEM
ARE HORTENCE.



MOST OF THEM
ARE **PAINTINGS**,
DAVID. THERE'S A
DIFFERENCE.



YOU'LL NOTICE THAT MY
NUDES NEVER RECLINE.
I AM OPPOSED TO
RECLINING NUDES. MY
NUDES ARE UPRIGHT,
STANDING, STRONG,
PREDATORY.

I WANT THE
VIEWERS TO FEEL
THAT IT IS **THEY**
THEMSELVES WHO
SHOULD BE RECLINING.



IF ONE DAY I EVER
MANAGE TO PAINT
PROPERLY AGAIN, I
WOULD LIKE TO
PAINT YOU.

ME? REALLY?
THAT'S, WELL, I'M... I'M
FLATTERED



MAY
I?

AHH...
SURE...

GO
AHEAD...



I'M A
PATHOLOGICALLY
TACTILE PERSON, REBECCA.
I NEVER WANT TO PAINT
SOMETHING UNTIL I HAVE
FIRST... **TOUCHED**
IT.

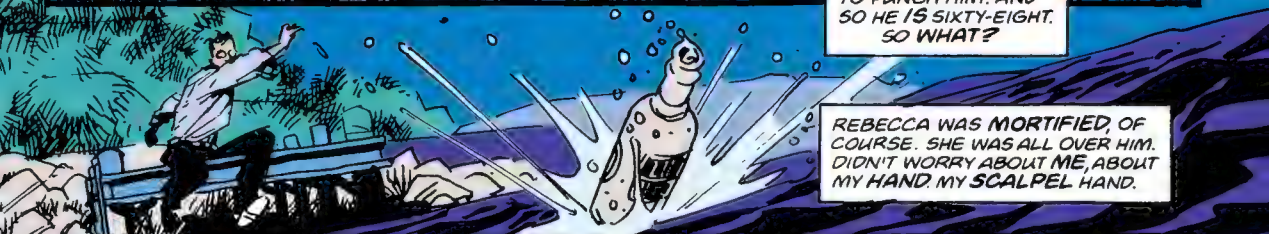




I DIDN'T MEAN TO PUNCH HIM. I WAS JUST GOING TO PUSH HIM.

I STUMBLED AT THE LAST MINUTE, I SUPPOSE.

OKAY, SO I DID MEAN TO PUNCH HIM. AND SO HE IS SIXTY-EIGHT. SO WHAT?



REBECCA WAS MORTIFIED, OF COURSE. SHE WAS ALL OVER HIM. DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT ME, ABOUT MY HAND MY SCALPEL HAND.



HAVE YOU GONE TOTALLY MAD?

HE HAD HIS HAND ON YOUR FUCKING TIT, REBECCA. WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO?



HE'S AN ARTIST, YOU IDIOT. HE'S ANDREW SPHINX. HE WANTS TO PAINT ME.

I JUST SAW HIS HAND AND...



PLEASE DON'T ARGUE. I'D HATE TO BE A CAUSE OF ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU.

I APOLOGIZE, DAVID. IT WAS WRONG OF ME TO TOUCH REBECCA. I'M AN OLD MAN WHO'S LOST ALL SENSE OF SOCIAL DECORUM.

ISN'T THAT TRUE, GILBERT?



YES, SIR. VERY.

YES, SIR. VERY.
I HADN'T
REALIZED OLD
GILBERT WAS
STANDING
THERE.

DID SPHINX MEAN
WHAT HE SAID,
ABOUT BEING
SORRY? MAYBE HE
IS JUST GETTING
SENILE, NOT USED
TO BEING AROUND
PEOPLE.

OR MAYBE HE'S A
CONNIVING,
SCHEMING BASTARD.
I WONDER IF I
SCREWED UP THESE
OPERATIONS AND HE
CAME OUT A MESS,
WHETHER HE COULD
SUE ME?

JESUS. I MUSTN'T
THINK LIKE THAT.
I'VE GOT TO CUT
DOWN ON THE
DRINK. THIS IS
IMPORTANT. THIS
IS MAKE OR
BREAK.

HAVE I TOLD YOU
ABOUT THE
PROBLEMS I'VE
BEEN HAVING LATELY
WITH MY BOSS, MEYER?

I BET OLD MEYER STEWED
IN BILE WHEN GILBERT
SAID SPHINX WANTED ME
AND NOT HIM. I'D LIKE TO...

DAVID?

HUH?

REBECCA!
YOU SCARED
THE SHIT OUT
OF ME.

SORRY. I
DIDN'T MEAN
TO CREEP UP
ON YOU.

WHAT ARE
YOU DOING OUT
HERE?

JUST, YOU KNOW,
GOING OVER THE
DELIGHTS OF
THE DAY.

YOU
SHOULDN'T
HAVE
PUNCHED
HIM.

I KNOW.

BUT I SHOULDN'T HAVE
LET HIM TOUCH ME LIKE
THAT. I WAS JUST ...
BOWLED OVER, THAT THE
GREAT ANDREW SPHINX
WOULD THINK ABOUT
PAINTING ME.

NO, I
WAS AN ASS-
HOLE. THERE WAS
NOTHING WRONG
IN HIM TOUCHING
YOUR BREAST. IT'S NOT
LIKE HE'S THE FIRST
ONE TO DO IT OR
ANYTHING.



OKAY, THAT'S IT.
I'M GOING BACK TO
THE ROOM.

I'M SORRY,
I'M SORRY. PLEASE
STAY. I'M STILL A
LITTLE DRUNK. I
DIDN'T MEAN TO
SAY THAT.



DAVID, WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE
THIS. I THINK YOU SHOULD
START SEEING DOCTOR
O'CONNOR AGAIN.

NO,
BECCY.
HE'S A
FLAKE. I
CAN'T TAKE
THAT KIND
OF SHIT.



I WAS HOPING...
OUR TIME HERE
MIGHT HELP.

IT WILL
HELP. WE JUST
HAVE TO...



WHAT?

AM I SEEING
THINGS OR IS THERE
A WOMAN DANCING BEHIND
THOSE TREES?



I DIDN'T
SEE ANY-
THING.

WAIT. THERE.
MY GOD.
LOOK.

I'M
LOOKING. IT'S
HER, ISN'T IT?



IT'S
HORRENCE.



DO YOU WANT
TO TAKE A CLOSER
LOOK?

I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE SHE'S INSANE
OR SOMETHING. MAYBE OLD
SPHINX KEEPS HER CHAINED
UP DURING THE DAY AND ONLY
LETS HER OUT AT NIGHT.



BUT REBECCA'S ALREADY
CREEPING THROUGH THE
MODERN ART TOWARDS
THE TREES BEYOND.

IT ALL SEEMS
SO ABSURDLY
SYMBOLIC, SO
WHAT CAN I DO?



SSHHH. I
THINK SHE'S UP
AHEAD.

YEAH. I
THINK I
CAN SEE HER
TOO...

LET'S GET A
LITTLE CLOSER.



YOU SAID
YOU SAW HER
DANCING.

I DID.
YOU SAW HER
TOO.



MAYBE
IT WAS JUST
A TRICK OF THE
LIGHT.



I DON'T
KNOW. I COULD
HAVE SWORN...



YOU COULD HAVE SWORN WHAT, DAVID?

OH, ANDREW, WE WERE JUST...

WE COULD HAVE SWORN WE SAW HER DANCING.



HER?

HORTENCE. WE SAW HER DANCING, THROUGH THE TREES.

THAT'S A LITTLE UNLIKELY, I THINK.



HORTENCE DIED TWENTY YEARS AGO.

I'M GOING TO BED NOW. YOU'RE WELCOME TO PLAY OUT HERE IN THE DARK FOR AS LONG AS YOU PLEASE.



BUT BE CAREFUL. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POISONOUS CREATURES ON THE ISLAND.



HOW COULD YOU HAVE THE HOTS FOR HIM?

I DO NOT HAVE THE HOTS FOR HIM. HE'S A GENIUS. HE INTERESTS ME.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A SIXTY-EIGHT-YEAR-OLD PENIS?



CHRIST, I'M NOT LISTENING TO THIS.

IT WAS A JOKE! A JOKE, BECCY. IT'S CALLED SELF-DEPRECATING HUMOR.

I'M NOT LAUGHING.





NEXT MORNING THE HANG-OVER IS NOTHING I CAN'T HANDLE. REBECCA'S OUT WALKING. IT'S DIAGNOSIS TIME.

I DON'T MEAN TO BE BITTER BUT I'M UNUSUALLY HARSH TODAY.



ANDREW, YOU'RE A NIGHTMARE. YOU ARE GOING TO STRETCH THE KNOWN BOUNDARIES OF AESTHETIC PLASTIC SURGERY.

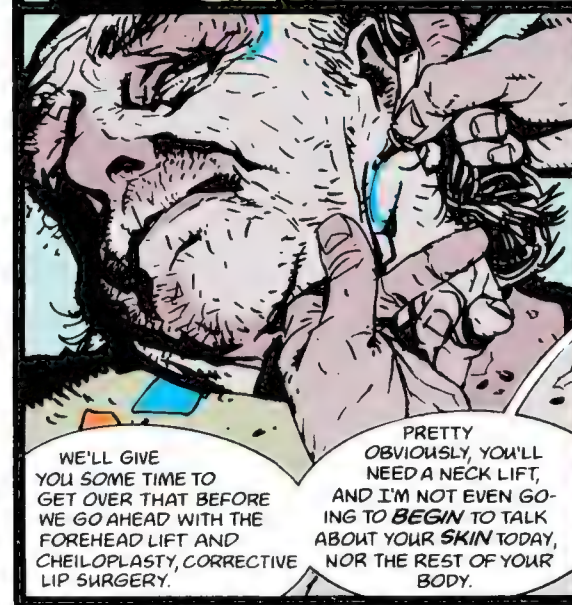
GOOD. YOU SHOULD ENJOY YOURSELF, THEN.



WE'LL START WITH A RHYTIDECTOMY, THAT'S A FACE LIFT, COUPLED WITH A NOSE JOB AND EYE BAG SURGERY.



WHILE I'VE GOT YOUR FACE OFF, I MIGHT TRY TO SQUEEZE IN A SUBMENTAL LIPECTOMY TO GET RID OF ALL THAT BLUBBER BENEATH YOUR RATHER WEAK CHIN, WHICH REALLY IS CRYING OUT FOR MENTOPLASTY.



WE'LL GIVE YOU SOME TIME TO GET OVER THAT BEFORE WE GO AHEAD WITH THE FOREHEAD LIFT AND CHEILOPLASTY, CORRECTIVE LIP SURGERY.

PRETTY OBVIOUSLY, YOU'LL NEED A NECK LIFT, AND I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO **BEGIN** TO TALK ABOUT YOUR SKIN TODAY, NOR THE REST OF YOUR BODY.



DAVID, HAVE YOU EVER ASKED YOURSELF WHAT CONSTITUTES A BEAUTIFUL FACE?

WHAT CONSTITUTES BEAUTY, PERIOD?



UHM, NO, I
HAVEN'T. NOT
REALLY.

HAVE YOU BEEN
LISTENING TO ANY-
THING I'VE BEEN
SAYING?



NO, I
HAVEN'T. NOT
REALLY.

WHAT
MAKES A FACE
BEAUTIFUL,
DAVID?

I'M NOT
PRETENDING TO BE
INNOCENT OR ABOVE
THESE JUDGMENTS, BUT
WHAT *IS* IT EXACTLY?



I THOUGHT WE WERE
DISCUSSING YOUR
SURGERY.

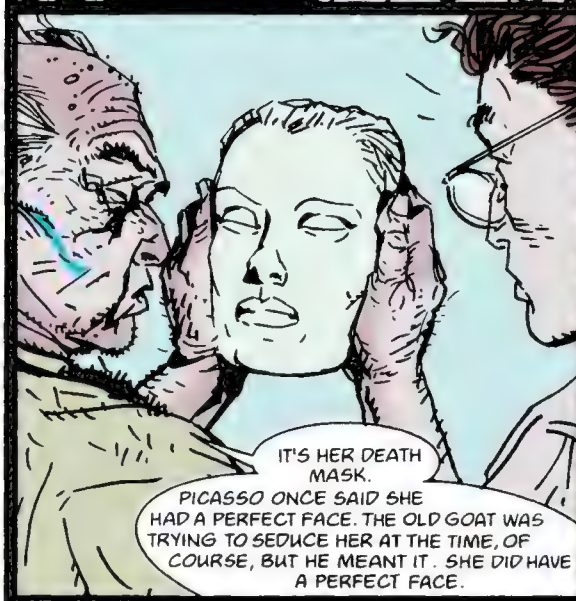
WE WERE,
WE *ARE*, AFTER
A FASHION.

COME HERE
I WANT TO SHOW YOU
SOMETHING.



WHAT MAKES
THAT FACE SO
BEAUTIFUL? IT *IS*
BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T
IT, EVEN IF WE
DON'T KNOW
WHY.

IT'S... IT'S
STUNNING.

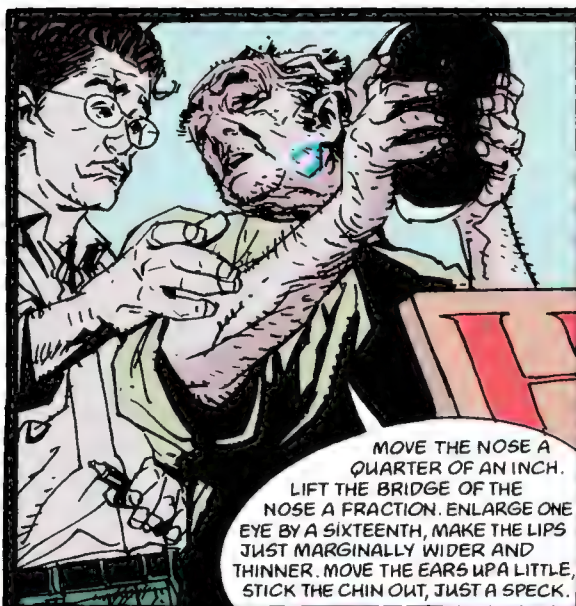


IT'S HER DEATH
MASK.

PICASSO ONCE SAID SHE
HAD A PERFECT FACE. THE OLD GOAT WAS
TRYING TO SEDUCE HER AT THE TIME, OF
COURSE, BUT HE MEANT IT. SHE DID HAVE
A PERFECT FACE.



BUT WHAT
MADE YOUR FACE
PERFECT?



MOVE THE NOSE A QUARTER OF AN INCH. LIFT THE BRIDGE OF THE NOSE A FRACTION. ENLARGE ONE EYE BY A SIXTEENTH, MAKE THE LIPS JUST MARGINALLY WIDER AND THINNER. MOVE THE EARS UP A LITTLE. STICK THE CHIN OUT, JUST A SPECK.



WHAT MINOR, WHAT RELATIVELY TRIVIAL CHANGES TO THE FEATURES WOULD IT TAKE TO TURN THIS PERFECT FACE INTO A PLAIN ONE?

INCREASE THOSE CHANGES, JUST SLIGHTLY, AND WE HAVE AN UGLY FACE.



HOW MUCH FURTHER ... HOW RADICAL AN ADJUSTMENT OF THE FEATURES, WOULD IT TAKE TO TURN THIS BEAUTIFUL FACE ... INTO A MONSTROUS ONE?



WHEN I SAID IT WAS A DEATH MASK I WAS BEING A LITTLE DISINGENUOUS.

I, TOO, HAVE BEEN SOMETHING OF A COSMETIC SURGEON, DAVID.

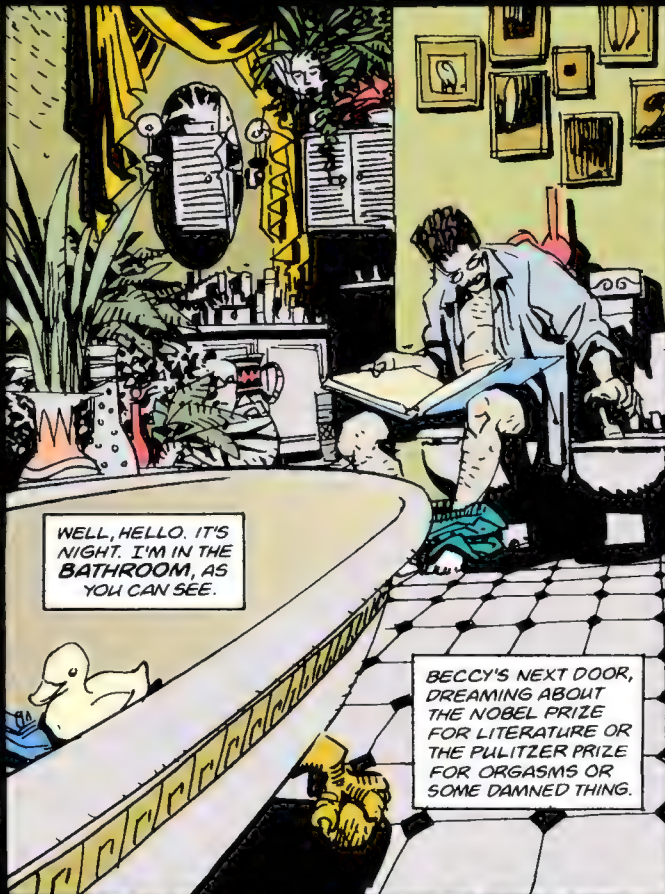


HORTENCE WAS FORTY-FIVE WHEN SHE DIED. HER FACE WAS NO LONGER QUITE THIS PERFECT.



I DID A LITTLE ... AESTHETIC MANIPULATION OF HER DEATH MASK, SO IN DEATH SHE WOULD BE AS BEAUTIFUL AS SHE WAS IN LIFE, BEFORE THE RAVAGES OF LIFE HAD BEGUN TO SHOW ITSELF ON HER FACE.



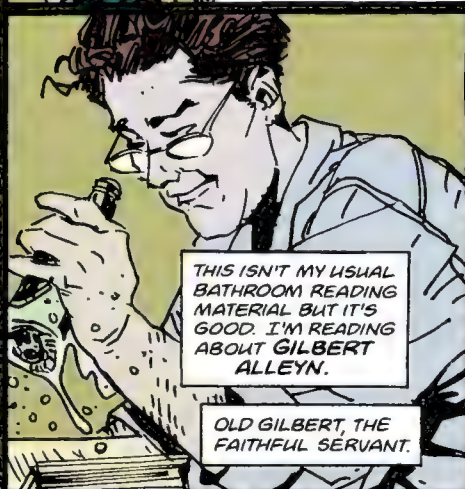


WELL, HELLO. IT'S
NIGHT. I'M IN THE
BATHROOM, AS
YOU CAN SEE.

BECCY'S NEXT DOOR,
DREAMING ABOUT
THE NOBEL PRIZE
FOR LITERATURE OR
THE PULITZER PRIZE
FOR ORGASMS OR
SOME DAMNED THING.



I'M READING AN
INTERESTING PARAGRAPH
IN ONE OF THE SPHINX
BOOKS THAT I
BROUGHT WITH ME.



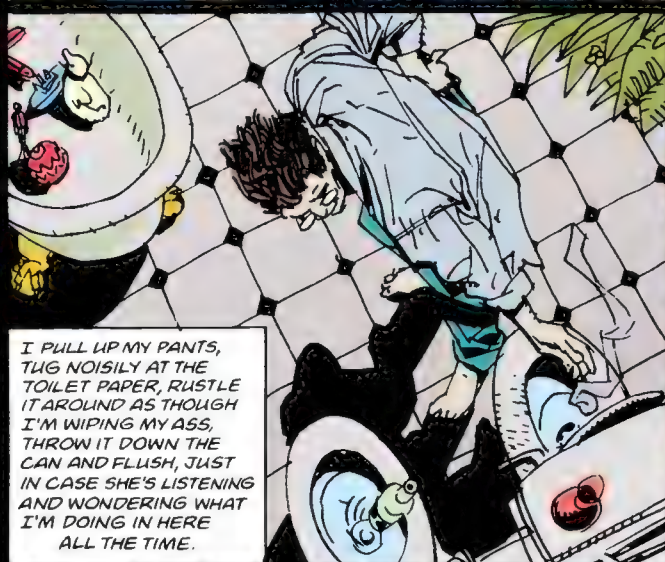
THIS ISN'T MY USUAL
BATHROOM READING
MATERIAL BUT IT'S
GOOD. I'M READING
ABOUT GILBERT
ALLEYN.

OLD GILBERT, THE
FAITHFUL SERVANT.

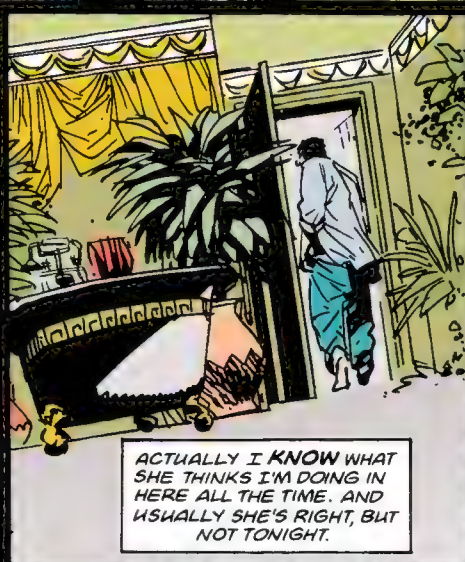


AND THEN I FIND A PHOTO-
GRAPH OF HORTENCE. I'M
A DOCTOR. I CAN'T USE
TERMS LIKE, MY HEART
SKIPPED OR MY HEART
MISSED A BEAT.

BUT IT FEELS LIKE IT.
IT REALLY DOES.



I PULL UP MY PANTS,
TUG NOISILY AT THE
TOILET PAPER, RUSTLE
IT AROUND AS THOUGH
I'M WIPING MY ASS,
THROW IT DOWN THE
CAN AND FLUSH, JUST
IN CASE SHE'S LISTENING
AND WONDERING WHAT
I'M DOING IN HERE
ALL THE TIME.



ACTUALLY I KNOW WHAT
SHE THINKS I'M DOING IN
HERE ALL THE TIME. AND
USUALLY SHE'S RIGHT, BUT
NOT TONIGHT.





WHO WOULDN'T RUN?
I DON'T CARE THAT
I'M A DOCTOR. WHO
WOULDN'T RUN?

WHO WOULD KNOW
WHERE THEY WERE
RUNNING TO?
WHO WOULD LOOK?



UNTIL THEY
WERE THERE, IN
THE MIDDLE OF
IT?

MY GOD...



SOMETHING
THE MATTER,
SIR?

GILBERT.
OH GOD, GILBERT...
I THOUGHT... I
THOUGHT...



WHAT DID
YOU THINK,
SIR?

I DON'T
KNOW. I REALLY
DON'T KNOW.
THERE'S...

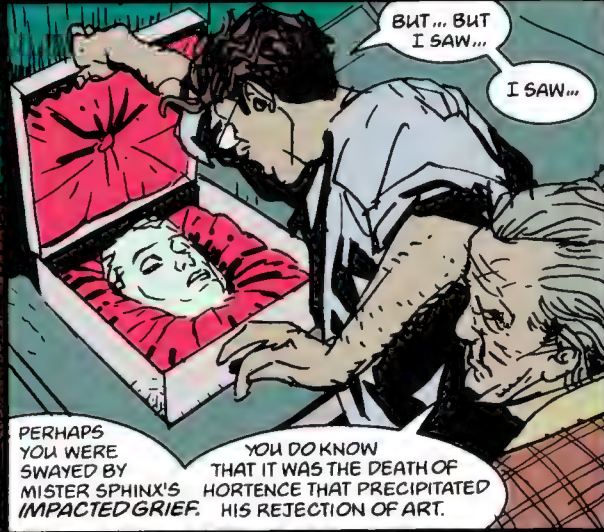
THERE'S
SOMETHING
WRONG WITH
THE **DEATH MASK**.
WITH HORTENCE'S
DEATH MASK.



WRONG,
SIR?



IT'S JUST A
DEATH MASK,
SIR.

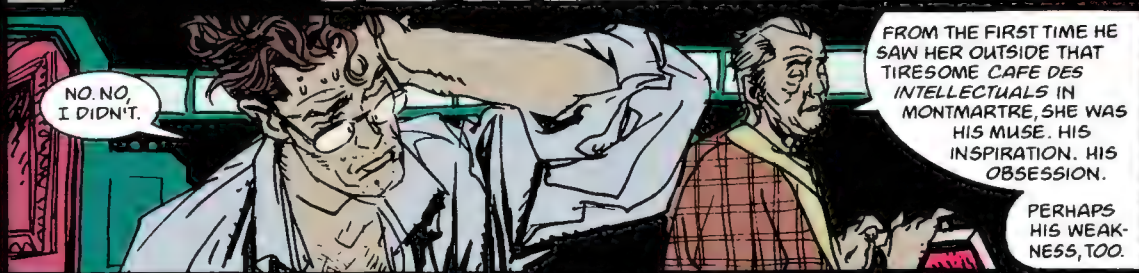


BUT... BUT
I SAW...

I SAW...

PERHAPS
YOU WERE
SWAYED BY
MISTER SPHINK'S
IMPACTED GRIEF.

YOU DO KNOW
THAT IT WAS THE DEATH OF
HORTENCE THAT PRECIPITATED
HIS REJECTION OF ART.



NO, NO,
I DIDN'T.

FROM THE FIRST TIME HE
SAW HER OUTSIDE THAT
TIREDSOME CAFE DES
INTELLECTUALS IN
MONTMARTRE, SHE WAS
HIS MUSE. HIS
INSPIRATION. HIS
OBSESSION.

PERHAPS
HIS WEAK-
NESS, TOO.



HIS
WEAKNESS?

HE WASN'T
THE GREATEST
ARTIST OF THIS
CENTURY, SIR. THAT
WAS MY LOYALTY
SPEAKING. HE
COULD NEVER QUITE
...TRANSCEND
HER.

I THINK
HE WOULD
HAVE BEEN
QUITE HAPPY
PAINTING
CHOCOLATE BOX
PICTURES OF
HER FOR THE
REST OF HIS
LIFE.



SHE HAD NEITHER
INTELLECT NOR WIT,
SIMPLY BEAUTY.
PURE, SPARKLING
SURFACE PERFECTION,
WHICH WAS ENOUGH
FOR HIM.

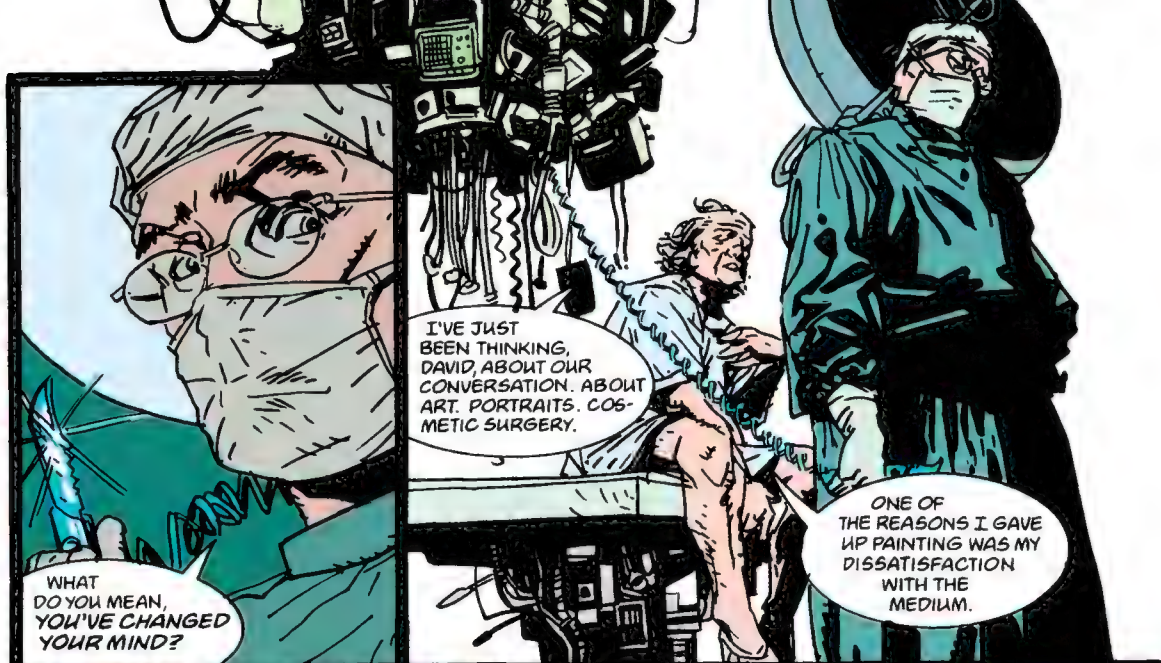
MORE THAN
ENOUGH. SHE
COULD TURN
HIM INTO A
CHILD.

BUT SHE
DIED.

NOW, IF
YOU'LL EXCUSE
ME, I REALLY
MUST GET BACK
TO MY COCOA
AND DICKENS.



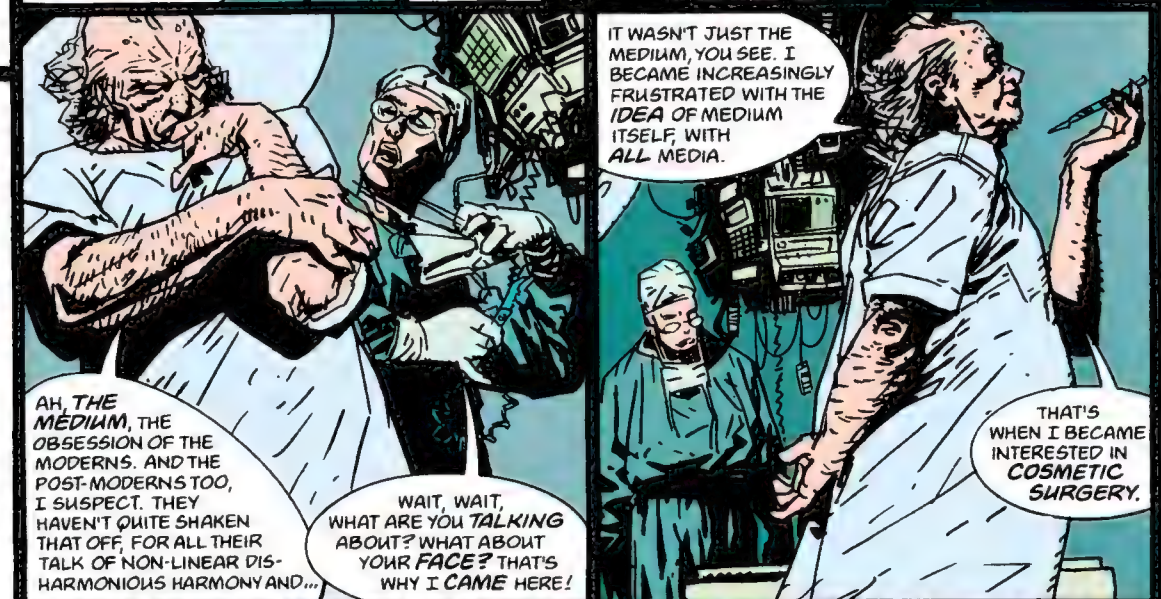
I THINK SOMEONE
MIGHT BE SLIPPING
SOMETHING INTO
MY FOOD.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU'VE CHANGED YOUR MIND?

I'VE JUST BEEN THINKING, DAVID, ABOUT OUR CONVERSATION. ABOUT ART. PORTRAITS. COSMETIC SURGERY.

ONE OF THE REASONS I GAVE UP PAINTING WAS MY DISSATISFACTION WITH THE MEDIUM.

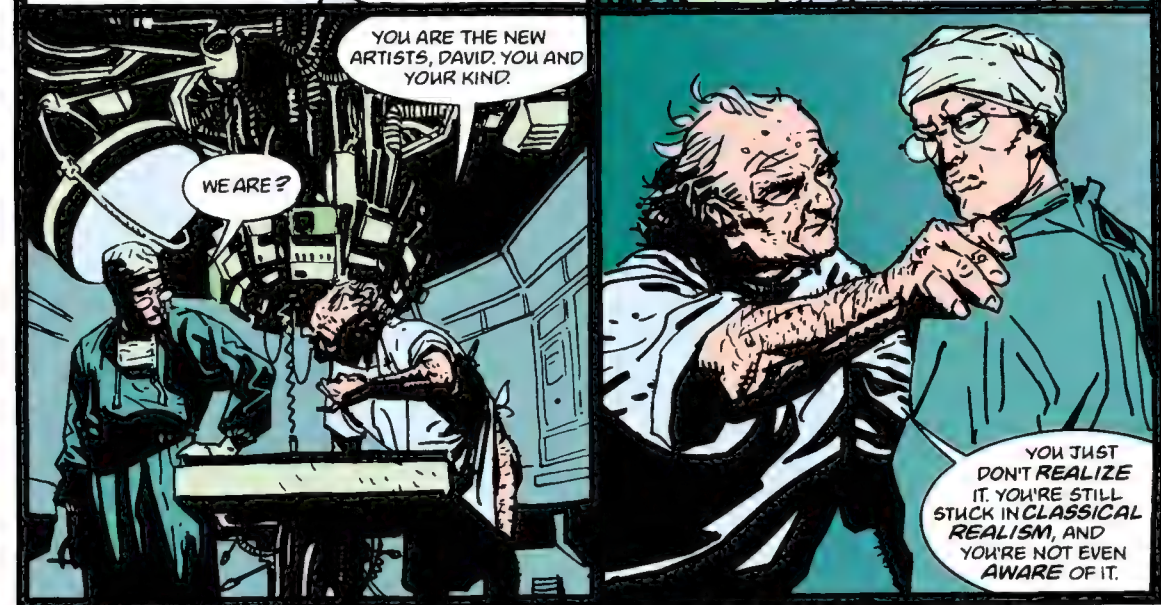


AH, THE MEDIUM, THE OBSESSION OF THE MODERNS. AND THE POST-MODERNS TOO, I SUSPECT. THEY HAVEN'T QUITE SHAKEN THAT OFF, FOR ALL THEIR TALK OF NON-LINEAR DIS-HARMONIOUS HARMONY AND...

WAIT, WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT ABOUT YOUR FACE? THAT'S WHY I CAME HERE!

IT WASN'T JUST THE MEDIUM, YOU SEE. I BECAME INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED WITH THE IDEA OF MEDIUM ITSELF, WITH ALL MEDIA.

THAT'S WHEN I BECAME INTERESTED IN COSMETIC SURGERY.



WE ARE?

YOU ARE THE NEW ARTISTS, DAVID. YOU AND YOUR KIND.

YOU JUST DON'T REALIZE IT. YOU'RE STILL STUCK IN CLASSICAL REALISM, AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN AWARE OF IT.



COSMETIC SURGERY IS THE NEW PORTRAITURE. BUT IT HAS DISPENSED WITH THE CANVAS. THE CANVAS IS THE PORTRAITEE. OBJECT IS SUBJECT, SUBJECT, OBJECT. THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE, AND THE MESSAGE IS ALSO THE MEDIUM.

BUT OUR TASK, DAVID, OUR TASK IS TO DRAG COSMETIC SURGERY INTO THE MODERN, AND THEN OUT AGAIN, INTO THE POST-MODERN.



LOOK AT THIS, PLEASE. ONE OF PICASSO'S PORTRAITS OF ME.



IT'S CUBIST, RIGHT?

CUBIST, EXACTLY. THANK GOD I'M DEALING WITH SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS ART.



ANDREW... YOU'VE TOTALLY LOST ME HERE.

THIS IS YOUR MODEL, DAVID. THIS IS WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO.



THIS IS A JOKE. THIS IS YOUR FAMOUSLY SKEWED SENSE OF HUMOR.



IT MIGHT BE A JOKE. JOKES ARE VERY USEFUL. JOKES ARE VERY POST-MODERN.



BUT I'M SERIOUS. I WANT YOU TO CHANGE MY FACE SO IT LOOKS LIKE THIS PORTRAIT.



IT'S
MONSTROUS.

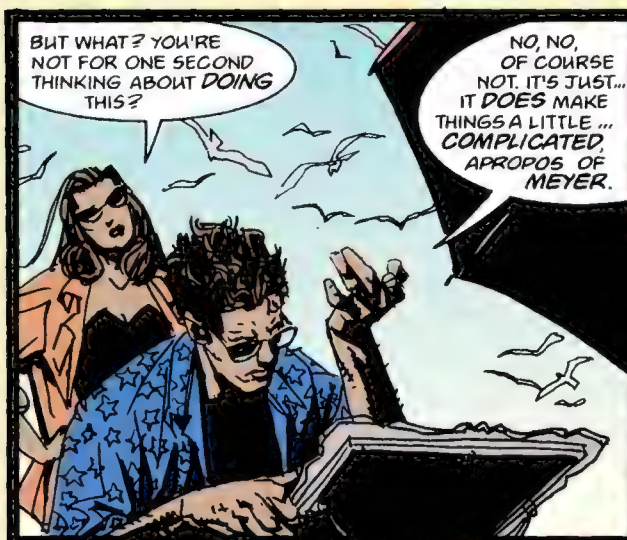
I KNOW, I KNOW. HE
MUST BE COMPLETELY
INSANE. I HAD MY
SUSPICIONS ALL
ALONG.



I GUESS THIS
MEANS WE'RE LEAVING
PARADISE. WHEN CAN WE
GET A BOAT OUT? I
LOOKED FOR A
PHONE ...

THE ISLAND
ISN'T CONNECTED.
THE NEXT BOAT'S DUE IN
TWO OR THREE
DAYS, BUT ...

WELL, I
AGREE WITH YOU
TOTALLY THAT IT'S
COMPLETELY MONSTROUS,
BUT ...



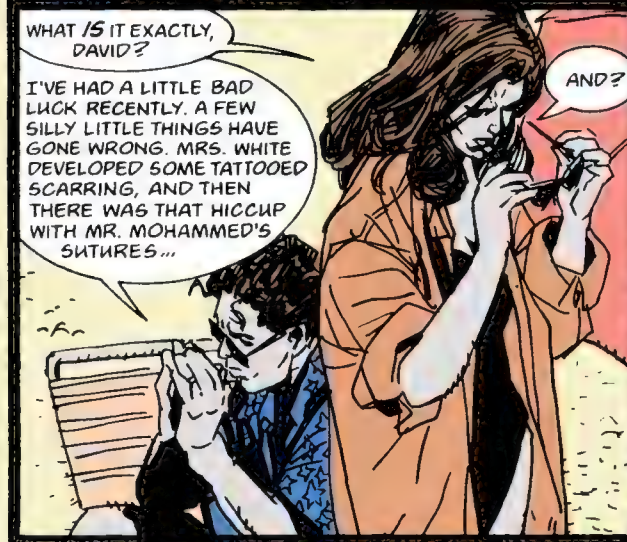
BUT WHAT? YOU'RE
NOT FOR ONE SECOND
THINKING ABOUT **DOING**
THIS?

NO, NO,
OF COURSE
NOT. IT'S JUST ...
IT **DOES** MAKE
THINGS A LITTLE ...
COMPLICATED
APPROPOS OF
MEYER.



SO YOU DON'T GET A
PROMOTION. IT CAN
WAIT.

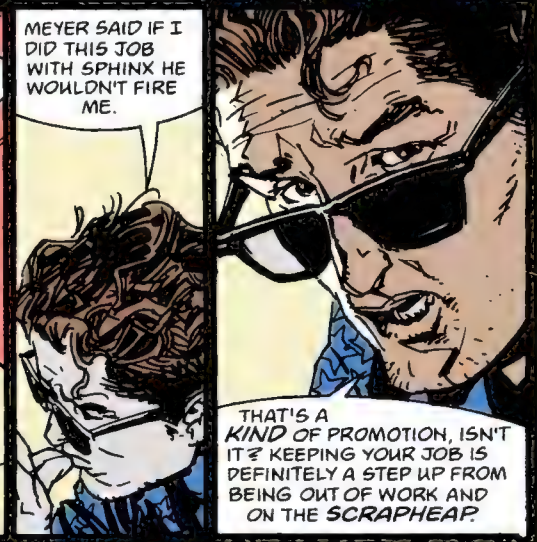
AH, DID I SAY
HE'D GIVE ME A
PROMOTION?
IT'S NOT **QUITE**
PROMOTION, REBECCA.
IT'S KIND OF **LIKE**
PROMOTION, BUT IT'S
NOT PROMOTION
EXACTLY.



WHAT **IS** IT EXACTLY,
DAVID?

I'VE HAD A LITTLE BAD
LUCK RECENTLY. A FEW
SILLY LITTLE THINGS HAVE
GONE WRONG. MRS. WHITE
DEVELOPED SOME TATTOOED
SCARRING, AND THEN
THERE WAS THAT HICCUP
WITH MR. MOHAMMED'S
SUTURES ...

AND?



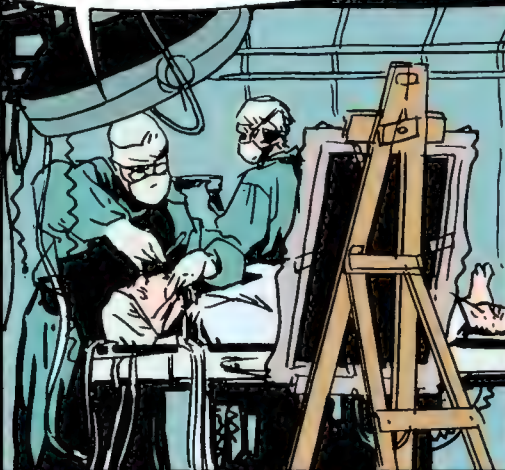
MEYER SAID IF I
DID THIS JOB
WITH SPHINX HE
WOULDN'T FIRE
ME.

THAT'S A
KIND OF PROMOTION, ISN'T
IT? KEEPING YOUR JOB IS
DEFINITELY A STEP UP FROM
BEING OUT OF WORK AND
ON THE **SCRAPHEAR.**



DON'T WORRY.
IT WILL SOON BE
OVER.

I WANT TO KEEP YOU CONSCIOUS FOR AS MUCH
OF THIS AS POSSIBLE, ANDREW. GENERAL
ANESTHETIC IS A MUSCLE RELAXANT AND SO
DISRUPTS THE FACE'S NATURAL
EXPRESSION.



OBVIOUSLY WE'RE NOT
GOING TO GET THIS ALL
DONE IN ONE GO. IT
COULD TAKE AS MANY
AS TWENTY OPERATIONS
TO GET CLOSE TO
YOUR PORTRAIT.

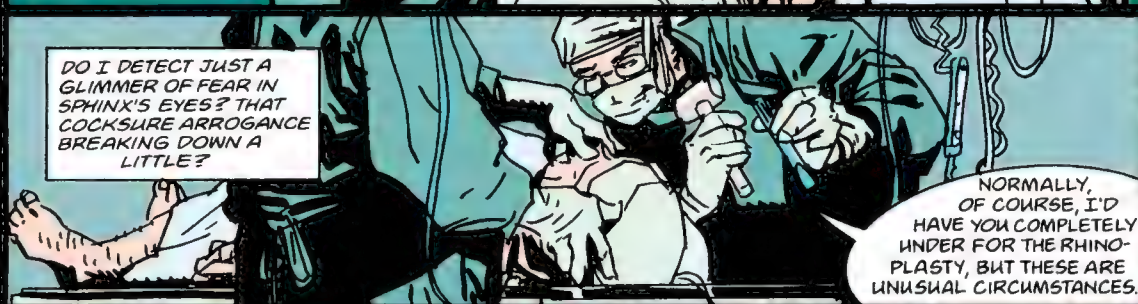


I'M GOING TO HAVE TO
MAKE EXTENSIVE USE OF
SKIN FLAPS, WHICH MIGHT
PROVE A LITTLE PAINFUL
LATER ON.

COULD YOU
HOLD THIS PLEASE,
GILBERT?



DO I DETECT JUST A
GLIMMER OF FEAR IN
SPHINX'S EYES? THAT
COCKSURE ARROGANCE
BREAKING DOWN A
LITTLE?



NORMALLY,
OF COURSE, I'D
HAVE YOU COMPLETELY
UNDER FOR THE RHINO-
PLASTY, BUT THESE ARE
UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

NOW
THIS MIGHT
HURT.



HUUHNNGGGG!

IT'S SIX WEEKS SINCE THAT FIRST OPERATION. I FINISHED OPERATION NUMBER TEN TWO DAYS AGO.

REBECCA AND I HAVEN'T REALLY SPOKEN MUCH RECENTLY. SHE'S WRITING. I HATE TO DISTURB HER.

BUT I DO ANYWAY...

HOW'S IT GOING?

I'M NOT SURE. I CAN'T SEEM TO CONCENTRATE.

I WONDER WHY.

I'M TAKING THE BANDAGES OFF TONIGHT. HE'S HAVING A CELEBRATORY DINNER, FOR THE BIG UNVEILING.

DAVID, I'M GOING.

BACK TO THE SUITE? I'LL COME WITH YOU.

NO, GOING, DAVID. I HAVE TO GO. I HATE THIS PLACE. AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS BEAUTIFUL. BUT NOW ... IT'S SICK.

DO YOU KNOW I FOUND ROWS OF PLASTIC FLOWERS STUCK INTO THE GROUND TODAY?

IT'S JUST HIS CRAZY SENSE OF HUMOR.

I HAVE NIGHTMARES, EVERY NIGHT I HAVE NIGHTMARES. GILBERT TOLD ME THERE'S A BOAT IN THREE DAYS. I'M GOING TO BE ON IT.

BUT I MIGHT BE HERE ANOTHER TWO MONTHS...

WELL, DON'T RUSH HOME ON MY ACCOUNT. I WON'T BE THERE.



REBECCA...

DON'T
PRETEND YOU'RE
SURPRISED. THIS HAS
BEEN ON THE CARDS FOR
A LONG TIME. I DO NOT
WANT TO LIVE LIKE THIS.



MY
GOD...



IT'S HER AGAIN.
THE DANCING
WOMAN.

SHE'S REAL,
ISN'T SHE? I'M
NOT IMAGINING
IT.

YOU'RE NOT
IMAGINING IT.

THIS TIME WE'RE MORE QUIET.
AS WE MOVE THROUGH THE
BUSHES I PUT MY HAND ON
REBECCA'S BACK. I IMAGINE
SPHINK'S HAND THERE AND
PULL MINE AWAY QUICKLY.

SHE NOTICES AND LOOKS AT
ME IN A WAY THAT MAKES
ME WANT TO CRY.



GOD... WHO
IS IT?

SOMEONE
WITH A LONG
HISTORY OF
MENTAL
ILLNESS.



ISN'T
THAT SO...

GILBERT?



YOU WERE A PROMISING ARTIST IN THE FIFTIES ... BUT YOU BECAME OBSESSED WITH SPHINX. YOU FOLLOWED HIM AROUND. YOU'D DO ANYTHING FOR HIM. YOU SPENT QUITE A LONG TIME IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL.

TO MY EVER-LASTING SHAME, IT'S ALL QUITE TRUE, SIR. ALL QUITE TRUE.

AND WAS THIS DANCING THING HIS IDEA?

IN THE BEGINNING. HE USED TO ENJOY WATCHING FROM AFAR, IMAGINING IT WAS HER. I HATED IT AT FIRST, BUT GRADUALLY...

I'M SORRY. I'M NOT VERY GOOD AT TALKING ABOUT THESE THINGS.

I SUPPOSE IF THE TRUTH WERE TOLD, WE ALL HAVE A LITTLE PART OF OUR ... SEXUALITY THAT ISN'T ALL IT MIGHT BE, SIR.

WHAT'S THAT LOOK HE GIVES ME? AM I JUST BEING PARANOID? WHAT WAS IT SPHINX SAID ABOUT MODERNISM AND POST-MODERNISM?

FROM THE PARANOID TO THE SCHIZOPHRENIC. WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?

HOW EXACTLY DID HORTENCE DIE, GILBERT?

YOU DON'T KNOW? I JUST PRESUMED YOU KNEW...

NO, WE DON'T.

SHE DIED ON THE OPERATING TABLE.

SHE WAS UNDERGOING COSMETIC SURGERY.



I'M GETTING DRUNK TOO QUICK. I THINK BECCY LOOKS A LITTLE TIPSY TOO. MAYBE THE DRINK IS SPIKED.

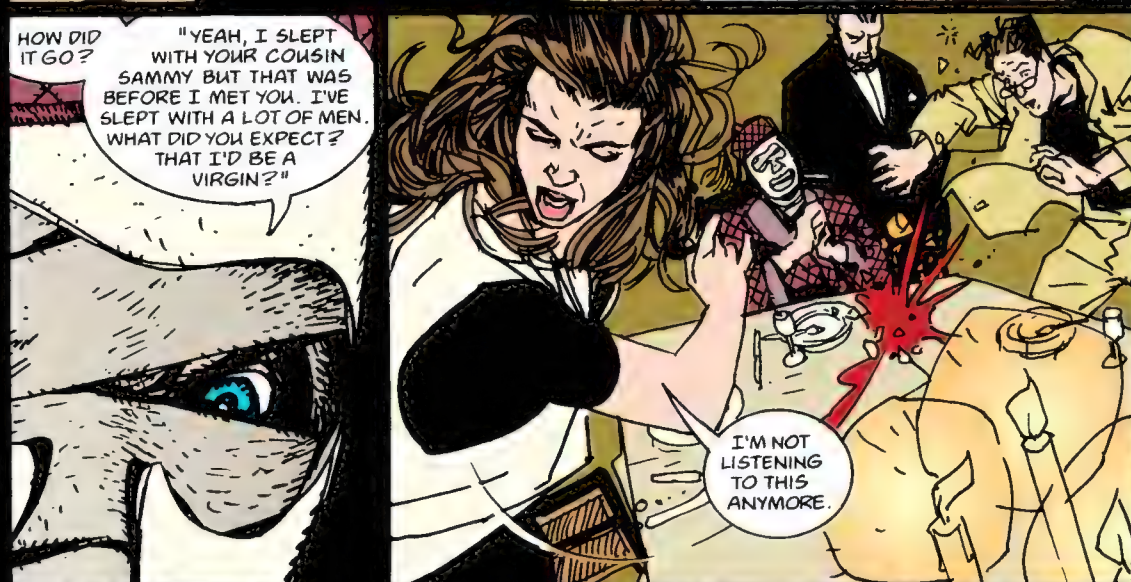
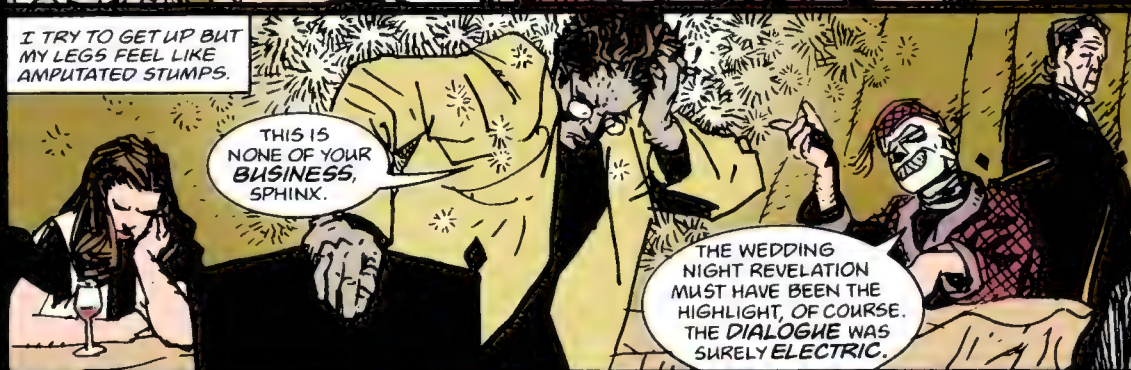
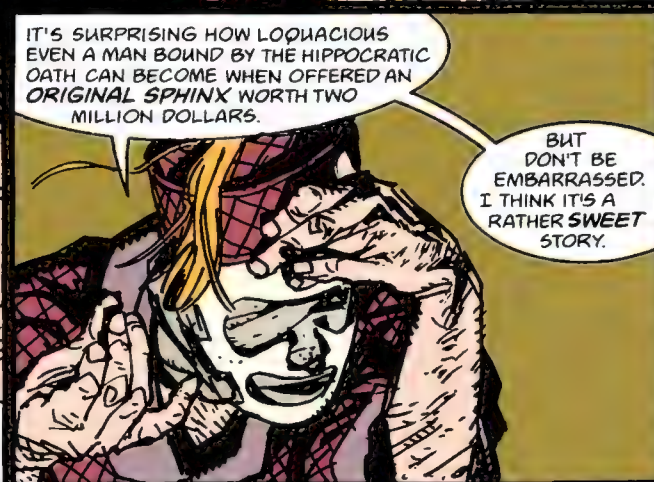
I HAVEN'T SEEN MUCH OF YOU LATELY, REBECCA. IS THE NOVEL PROGRESSING?



IT'S ABOUT A MAN WHO CAN'T MAKE LOVE TO HIS WIFE, BUT WHO INSTEAD MASTURBATES WHILE READING TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND IMAGINING THE WOMEN HE COLLECTED THEM FROM.



IT'S SO HARD TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE NOWADAYS. MORE GOAT CURRY?





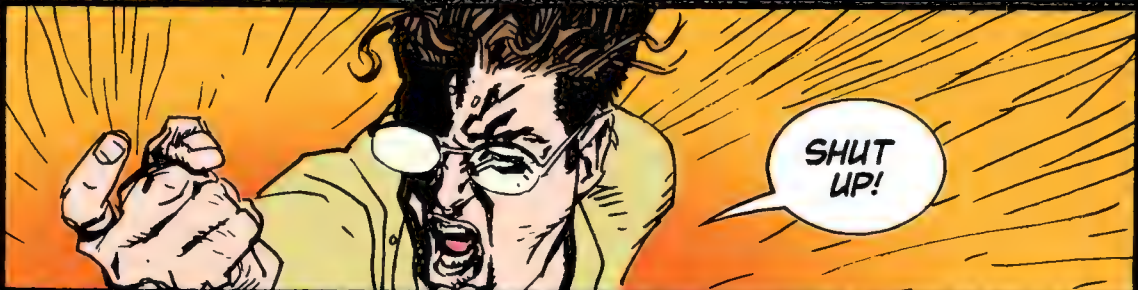
DAVID, I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE BUT IF I WERE YOU I'D BE ON THAT BOAT WITH ME WHEN IT LEAVES.

THIS IS ALL VERY SICK, DAVID. THAT MAN IS SICK. AND I THINK YOU'LL BE SICK IF YOU STAY HERE.



HOW IT MUST HAVE HURT YOU, KNOWING YOUR SWEET REBECCA HAD SLEPT WITH YOUR COUSIN SAMMY.

HOW YOU MUST HAVE **SUFFERED**. EVERY TIME YOU TOUCHED HER, IMAGINING SAMMY TOUCHING HER, IMAGINING **ALL** THE MEN WHO HAD TOUCHED HER BEFORE YOU. IMAGINING ...



SHUT UP!



SHUT UP YOU PERVERTED OLD SHIT OR I'LL ...

OR YOU'LL WHAT? OR YOU'LL WHAT, DAVID?



YOU'LL GIVE ME A BLACK EYE? YOU'LL BLOODY MY NOSE?

YOU'LL MAKE A MESS OF MY FACE?



PLEASE, DAVID. THE BANDAGES.

THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE AN UNVEILING CEREMONY.



OKAY. BUT REBECCA'S RIGHT. I'M GOING.

BUT THE PERFORMANCE ISN'T OVER YET, DAVID.

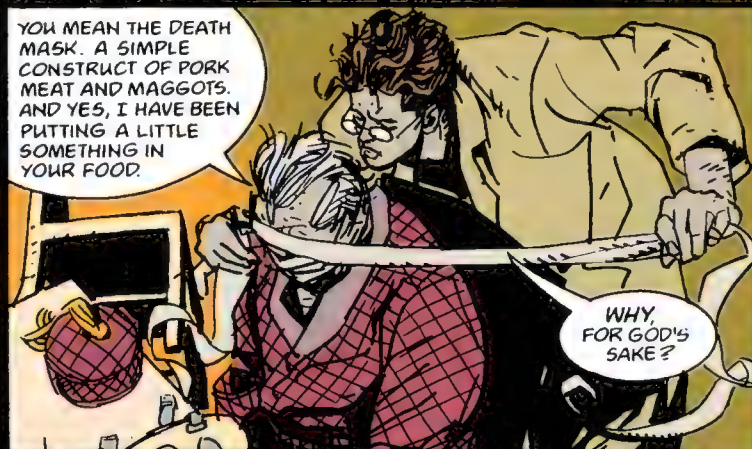


WHAT PERFORMANCE?



THIS PERFORMANCE. THIS HAPPENING. THIS PIECE OF POST-MODERN ART, FULL OF ALL THE THINGS SUCH A CREATURE SHOULD POSSESS. PASTICHE, HUMOR, PARODY, PLAY, ABSURDITY... CONFRONTATION.

YOU'VE BEEN PUTTING DRUGS IN MY FOOD. HAVEN'T YOU? SOME OF THE THINGS I'VE SEEN...



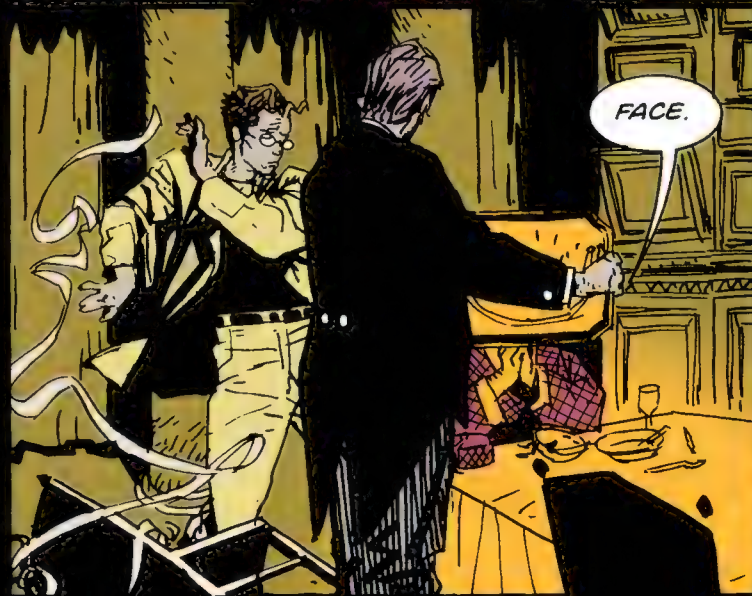
YOU MEAN THE DEATH MASK. A SIMPLE CONSTRUCT OF PORK MEAT AND MAGGOTS. AND YES, I HAVE BEEN PUTTING A LITTLE SOMETHING IN YOUR FOOD.

WHY, FOR GOD'S SAKE?



BECAUSE YOU'RE A PART OF THIS PERFORMANCE.

AND YOU CAN GUESS WHAT THE PERFORMANCE IS CALLED.



FACE.



I HEAR HIM WHIMPER. JUST A LITTLE, A STRANGLING MOAN, AS THOUGH CAUGHT UNAWARE, AS THOUGH HIS MASK HAS SLIPPED, WHEN HE SEES HIS FACE IN THE MIRROR.



THE, AH, SCARS
SHOULD FADE IN
TIME.

WHAT DO
YOU THINK?

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I
WANT TO BE SICK. I WANT
TO CRAWL INTO THE
CORNER AND BECOME
A BOWL OF JELL-O.

IT'S...
COMING ALONG...
VERY WELL...

WHAT
DO YOU
THINK,
GILBERT?



I
THINK SIR
LOOKS REMARKABLY
CUBIST.

WILL
YOU REQUIRE
BRANDY IN
THE LIBRARY
OR ON THE
VERANDA?



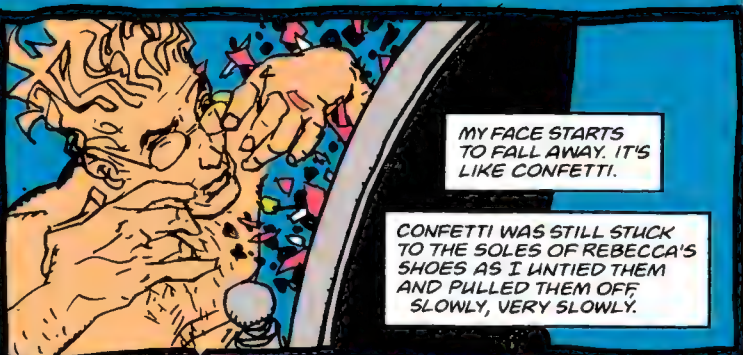
OH...

THE
VERANDA,
I THINK.



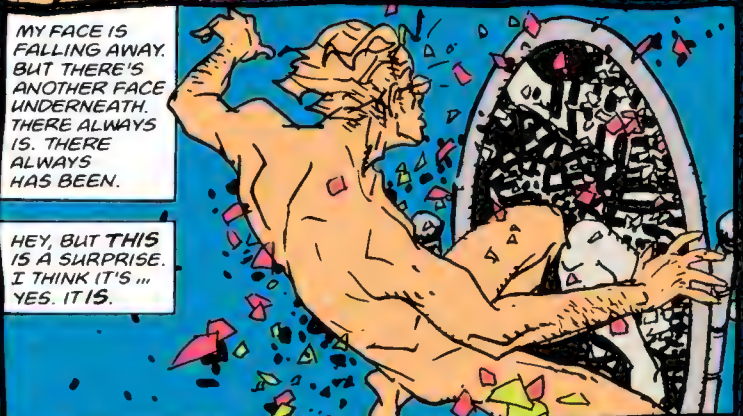
WOW. I'M DREAMING.
I MUST BE. THIS IS
A DREAM, RIGHT?

I MEAN, YOU
WOULD TELL ME
IF IT WASN'T?



MY FACE STARTS
TO FALL AWAY. IT'S
LIKE CONFETTI.

CONFETTI WAS STILL STUCK
TO THE SOLES OF REBECCA'S
SHOES AS I UNTIED THEM
AND PULLED THEM OFF
SLOWLY, VERY SLOWLY.

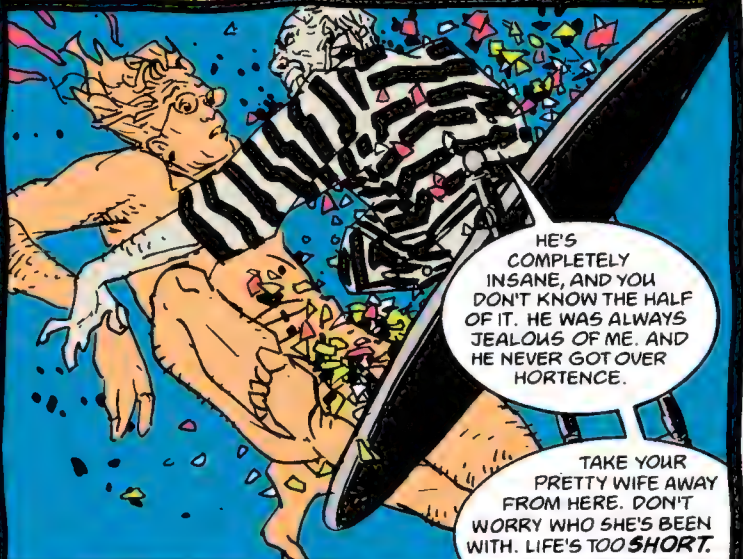


MY FACE IS
FALLING AWAY.
BUT THERE'S
ANOTHER FACE
UNDERNEATH.
THERE ALWAYS
IS. THERE
ALWAYS
HAS BEEN.

HEY, BUT THIS
IS A SURPRISE.
I THINK IT'S ""
YES. IT IS.



IT'S PABLO
PICASSO!



HE'S
COMPLETELY
INSANE, AND YOU
DON'T KNOW THE HALF
OF IT. HE WAS ALWAYS
JEALOUS OF ME. AND
HE NEVER GOT OVER
HORTENCE.

TAKE YOUR
PRETTY WIFE AWAY
FROM HERE. DON'T
WORRY WHO SHE'S BEEN
WITH. LIFE'S TOO SHORT.



SWIM AWAY FROM HERE
IF NEED BE, BUT GO. MAKE
LOVE TO HER. BE NICE TO
EACH OTHER. GO TO
NIGHT SCHOOL TOGETHER
AND LEARN SPANISH.
OR BETTER STILL,
CATALAN.



WHAT THE HELL DID THAT MEAN? I'M AWAKE NOW. I AM AWAKE, AREN'T I?

YES. I MUST BE. I NEVER FEEL QUITE THIS LOUSY WHEN I'M DREAMING.

THE AIR IS LIKE A SWAMP. IT'S ALMOST MORNING. I KNOW THIS FEELING. I WAS DRUGGED OUT OF MY MIND LAST NIGHT.

I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER COMING TO BED.

BUT I REMEMBER WHAT PABLO TOLD ME. THANK YOU, PABLO. THANK YOU. I'LL NEVER POKE FUN AT YOUR BLUE PERIOD AGAIN.

(SEE, I'VE BEEN READING UP ON THIS STUFF.)

HEY, BECCY. WAKE UP. IT'S MORNING.

HMMMMMM?

OH JESUS!

HMMM... DAVID? DAVID, WHAT'S HAPPENED... MY FACE...

DON'T WORRY... IT'S JUST THE MASK...

AHHHH... THAT HURTS... STOP PULLING. THAT HURTS.

IT **WOULD** HURT. IT'S BEEN AFFIXED WITH A PARTICULARLY POWERFUL GLUE. ONE OF THOSE MODERN SUPER-ADHESIVES.

I HAD IT MADE ESPECIALLY. APPARENTLY YOU CAN GLUE AN ELEPHANT TO THE UNDERSIDE OF A BRIDGE WITH IT.

I IMAGINE THAT EVENTUALLY GRAVITY WOULD CAUSE THE ELEPHANT TO FALL. BUT I LIKE TO THINK THAT THE ELEPHANT'S **SKIN** WOULD REMAIN ATTACHED TO THE BRIDGE, EMPTY AND GREY.

JUST LIKE YOUR FACE, DAVID. EMPTY AND GREY.

I'LL KILL YOU!

I DON'T THINK SO, DAVID. BUT REBECCA NEEDS YOUR HELP.

DAVID... DAVID, I'M SCARED... IT'S HURTING...

IT'S OKAY, SWEETHEART. I'LL GET IT OFF. DON'T WORRY.

I THINK YOU SHOULD HURRY. APPARENTLY, THE ADHESIVE WILL CONTINUE TO BIND, TIGHTER AND TIGHTER, WITH HER SKIN. THE BLOOD SUPPLY WILL SOON BE SO RESTRICTED THAT...

I THINK I GET THE PICTURE, SPHINX.



IS THIS WHAT
HE WANTED TO
SEE ALL ALONG?



A REENACTMENT?



A REPLAY OF HORTENSE
UNDER THE COSMETIC
SURGEON'S KNIFE?



MY HAND IS
SHAKING. MY
MOUTH IS DRY.

I NEED
A DRINK.

BUT I MUSTN'T DRINK, NOT NOW, NOT
NOW. IF I'M EVER GOING TO NOT
SCREW UP, IT HAS TO BE NOW.



YOU'LL BE
ASLEEP, BECCY.
YOU WON'T FEEL
A THING.

YOU'LL
WAKE UP
AND THE
MASK WILL
BE OFF.



WHAT WILL
YOU HAVE TO...
CUT AWAY?

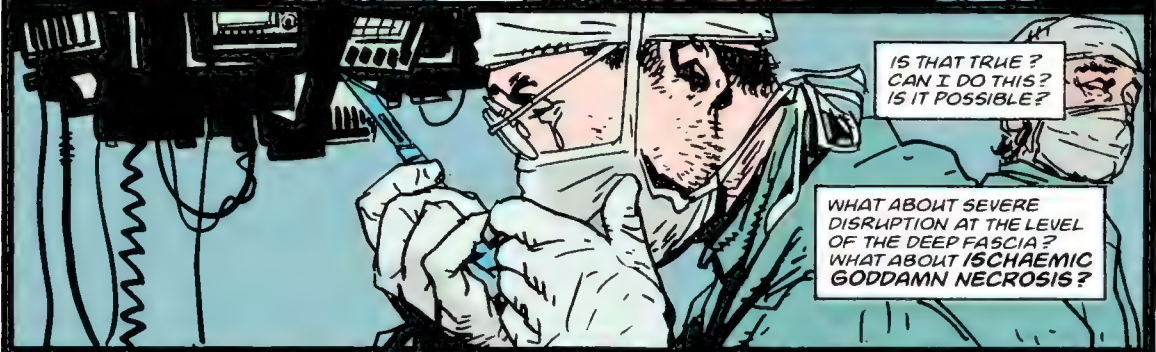
MY WHOLE
FACE?



WILL I?
WILL I?

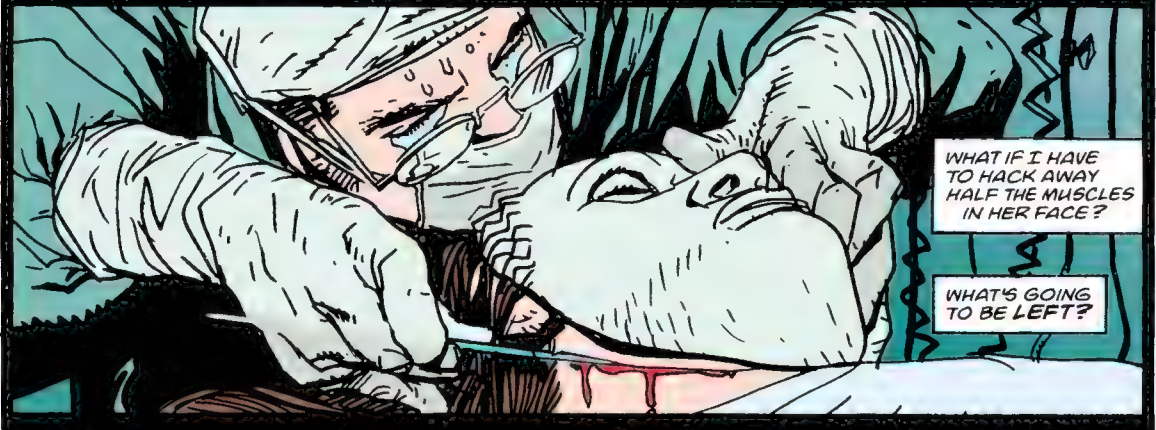
NO, OF COURSE NOT.
JUST THE TOP LAYERS
OF SKIN. ONCE THE
MASK IS OFF AND
WE'RE BACK HOME
YOU'LL HAVE A FEW
SIMPLE SKIN
GRAFTS.

IN A FEW
MONTHS NO
ONE WILL KNOW
ANYTHING'S
HAPPENED TO
YOU.



IS THAT TRUE?
CAN I DO THIS?
IS IT POSSIBLE?

WHAT ABOUT SEVERE
DISRUPTION AT THE LEVEL
OF THE DEEP FASCIA?
WHAT ABOUT ISCHAEMIC
GODDAMN NECROSIS?



WHAT IF I HAVE
TO HACK AWAY
HALF THE MUSCLES
IN HER FACE?

WHAT'S GOING
TO BE LEFT?

HAVE I EVER TOLD
YOU HOW MUCH I
LOVE REBECCA?

HAVE I EVER TOLD
YOU HOW SCARED I
AM OF LOSING HER?







YOU'VE GONE ALONG WITH HIM. YOU HELPED HIM. FOR ALL I KNOW IT WAS YOU WHO GLUED THE DEATH MASK ONTO... ONTO... MY WIFE.

NO... NO, SIR. ADMITTEDLY... I COLLUDED WITH HIM...

BUT I NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD GO THIS FAR.



YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME. HE'S MAD. HE'S GOT A GUN. HE'LL KILL ME, HE'LL KILL YOU SOONER OR LATER. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG HE'S BEEN CRAZY BUT HE'S OVER THE EDGE NOW. HE'S OUT OF CONTROL.



I CAN'T... I CAN'T BETRAY HIM...

HE'S NOT THE PERSON YOU KNEW. HE'S NOT ANDREW SPHINX THE ARTIST. HE'S ANDREW SPHINX THE SICK PSYCHOPATHIC MONSTER.



HE EVEN LOOKS LIKE A MONSTER.

GOD HELP ME, THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT HE WANTED.



GILBERT, YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE, YOU'RE GOING TO STAND UP TO THAT MONSTER.



YES.

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT.

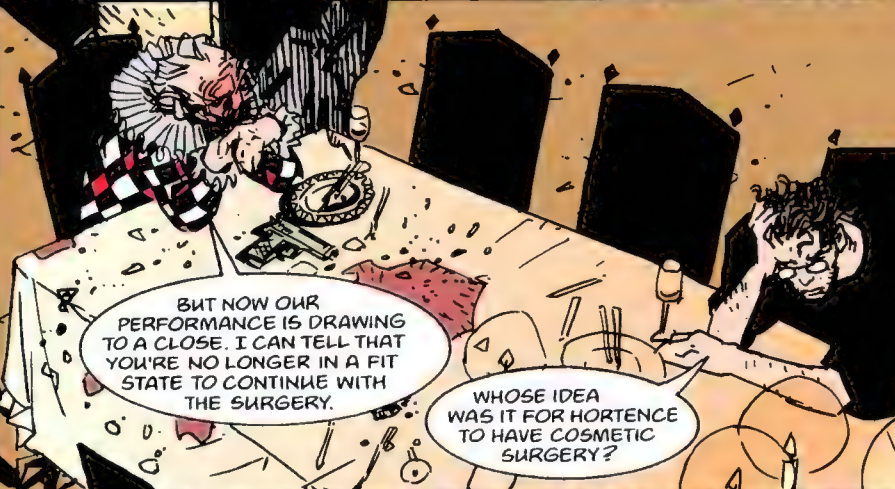
I WILL.



YOU SEE, IN THIS POST-MODERN AGE NOTHING IS **QUITE** WHAT IT SEEMS. BEHIND THE FACE, LIES WHAT?

BEHIND THIS PERFORMANCE, LIES WHAT?

HE SEEMS A LITTLE DRUNK OR HIGH. HE KEEPS TOUCHING HIS FACE. I THINK HIS NEW FACE IS DRIVING HIM CRAZY. GOOD. THAT'S GOOD.

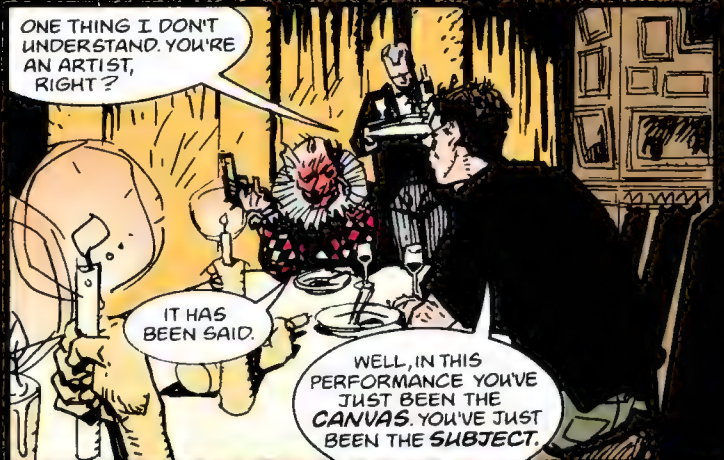


BUT NOW OUR PERFORMANCE IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE. I CAN TELL THAT YOU'RE NO LONGER IN A FIT STATE TO CONTINUE WITH THE SURGERY.

WHOSE IDEA WAS IT FOR HORTENCE TO HAVE COSMETIC SURGERY?



OH, IT WAS MINE. SHE ONLY DID IT FOR ME. I DON'T BLAME MYSELF. HER FACE WAS PERFECT. IT WAS RIGHT THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO RETAIN THAT PERFECTION FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.



ONE THING I DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE AN ARTIST, RIGHT?

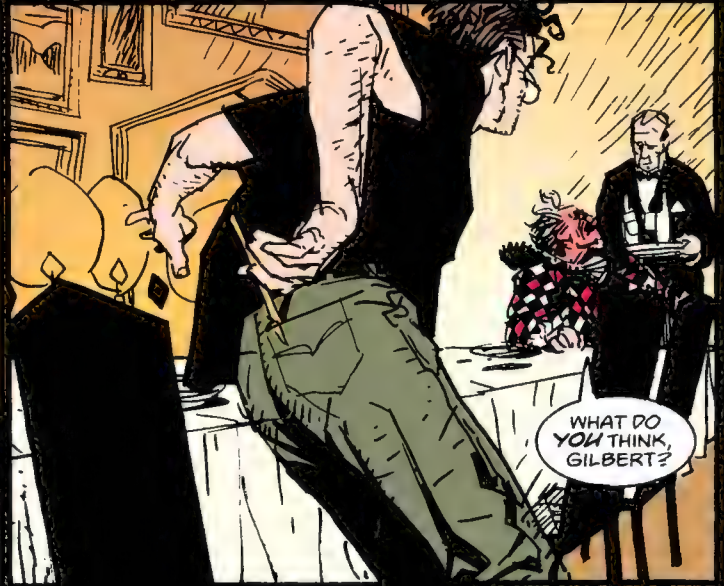
IT HAS BEEN SAID.

WELL, IN THIS PERFORMANCE YOU'VE JUST BEEN THE **CANVAS**. YOU'VE JUST BEEN THE **SUBJECT**.

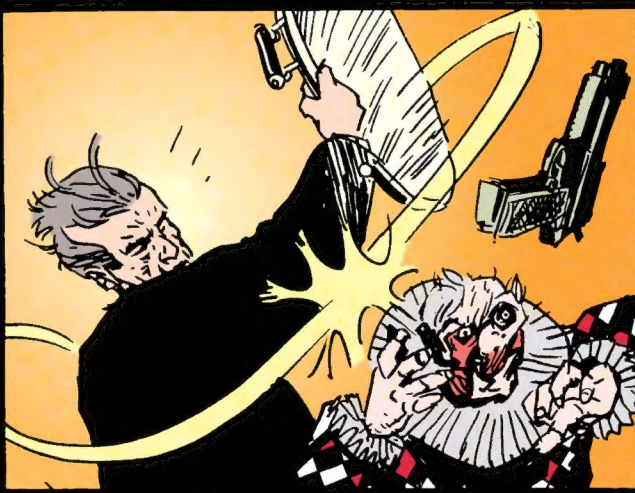


I'D HAVE THOUGHT, FOR IT TO BE A ROUNDED PERFORMANCE, YOU'D HAVE HAD TO HAVE BEEN THE SURGEON ALSO. THE **OBJECT**. THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE, THE MESSAGE IS THE MEDIUM.

ACTUALLY, THAT'S A GOOD POINT.



WHAT DO YOU THINK, GILBERT?





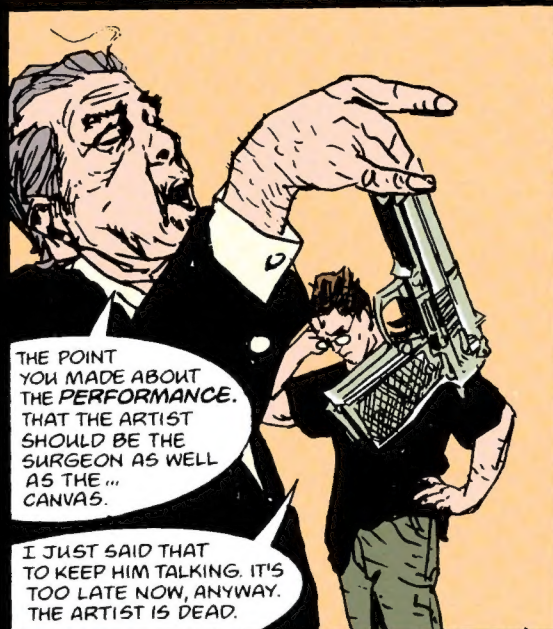
THANK YOU.

QUITE ALL RIGHT, SIR.



IF I MAY SAY SO, SIR, YOU MADE YET ANOTHER ASTUTE COMMENTARY.

EXCUSE ME?



THE POINT YOU MADE ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE. THAT THE ARTIST SHOULD BE THE SURGEON AS WELL AS THE ... CANVAS.

I JUST SAID THAT TO KEEP HIM TALKING. IT'S TOO LATE NOW, ANYWAY. THE ARTIST IS DEAD.



THAT'S RIGHT. THE ARTIST IS DEAD. THE OLD, MODERNIST ARTIST-AS-GENIUS MUST BE THROWN TO THE ROCKS.

BEFORE THE NEW ARTIST CAN BE BORN.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



I SEE THE GUN COMING TOWARDS ME.

I THINK HE'S GOING TO...

MY HEAD HURTS AND WHEN I MOVE THE MUSCLES IN MY FACE THEY FEEL A LITTLE ... TIGHT.

I KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.

ETHYL CHLORIDE, OR SOME SIMILAR ANESTHETIC.

HE'S GIVEN ME SOME OTHER STUFF TOO. MAYBE NOVOCAINE, I HAVE THIS RIDICULOUS SENSE OF WARMTH AND WELL-BEING.

AH, YOU'RE AWAKE. GOOD.

GILBERT, I MEAN ... ANDREW. IT IS ANDREW, ISN'T IT?

YES, DAVID. I'M ANDREW. YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK I'D BE THAT AWFUL STEREOTYPE OF THE MAD ARTIST?

IT FOOLED ME. WHAT EXACTLY... ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

NOT SURE, DAVID. I'M GOING TO IMPROVISE.

WE'RE BRANCHING OUT INTO A NEW ART FORM HERE. A WHOLE NEW SET OF AESTHETIC VALUES. IT'S UNCHARTED WATER.

HOW LONG HAD GILBERT ALLEN BEEN PRETENDING HE WAS YOU?

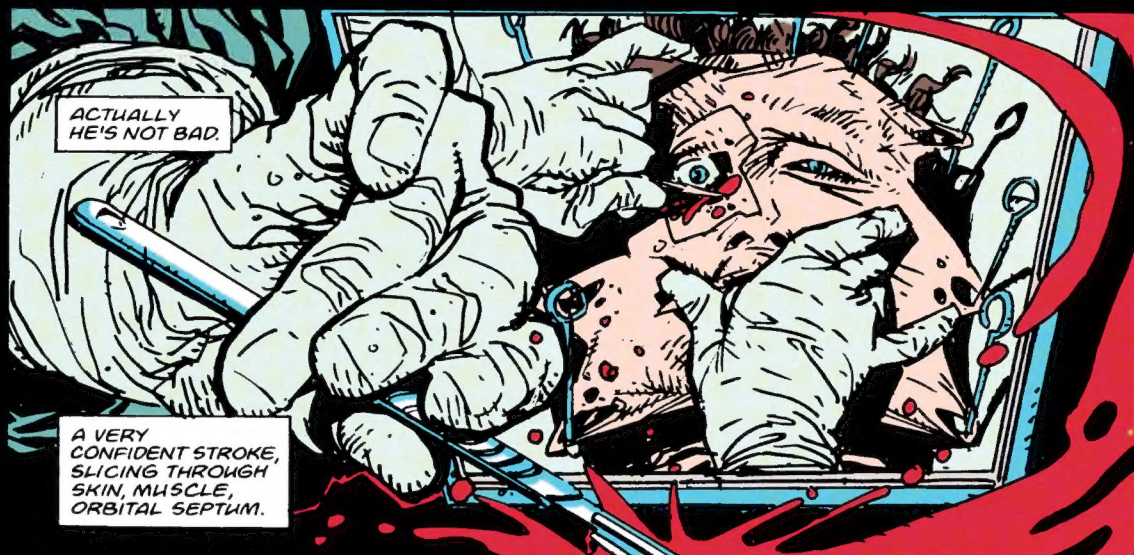
A FEW YEARS. IT WAS A VERY USEFUL METHOD OF TRANSCENDING MY OLD SELF, OF KILLING THAT OLD SELF OFF.

THE IDIOT WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR ME. OF COURSE, I DIDN'T TELL HIM IT WOULD END LIKE THIS.

I SIMPLY TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD BECOME MY GREATEST MASTERPIECE. HE WORSHIPPED ME. HIS IDEA OF HEAVEN WAS TO BE A CANVAS FOR MY GENIUS. BY THE TIME YOU ARRIVED HE WAS COMPLETELY INSANE. HE GLADLY ACCEPTED THE ...

MUTILATION.

NOW, I THINK I'M GOING TO WORK ON THE EYES, DAVID.



ACTUALLY
HE'S NOT BAD.

A VERY
CONFIDENT STROKE,
SLICING THROUGH
SKIN, MUSCLE,
ORBITAL SEPTUM.



I THINK I MIGHT
TRY TO THINK
ABOUT SOMETHING
ELSE NOW.



THIS IS A DREAM,
RIGHT?



I MEAN, YOU
WOULD TELL ME
IF IT WASN'T?



HAVE I EVER
TOLD YOU ...



YES ...



I THINK I
PROBABLY
HAVE TOLD
YOU.